

# Sewanee Review

Vol. XLIX]

SEWANEE, TENNESSEE

[No. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1941

## ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES

**E**X-COLONEL Lindbergh may know aviation, for all I know; and he may be patriotic; but his concept of "patriotism" seems, in the light of Nazi tactics in Europe, extraordinarily like the now-familiar "softening" processes of Nazi preliminaries. To assure us, at one moment, that there is no danger to the United States, and at the next moment, to assure us that we must defend ourselves (even though he says there is little likelihood of our success against Nazi might and cunning) sounds perilously like muddle-headedness or deliberate Quislingism. We may be charitable and assume the former. If Mr. Lindbergh's plea is for "patriotism", then there was more than we thought in what Edith Cavell said: "Patriotism is not enough!" The best patriotism for the United States in the present crisis is intelligence and realistic thinking based on accessible knowledge of Nazi tactics.

Mr. Lindbergh couldn't possibly have read Herr Hitler's *MEIN KAMPF*; and, if he has read newspapers of the last three years,

he has an excellent forgettery. Hitler does not depend on obvious means of military action alone for his conquests. He has shown us how to conquer by telephone. His contrivances and ruses were partly described in *MEIN KAMPF* which is a good-enough handbook to meet him on his own ground. In the United States he already has a well-organized sabotage and espionage system. Our enemies use the well-intentioned, but frequently stupid, sentimentalities of democrats to destroy Democracy from within. One need not believe that ex-Colonel Lindbergh is in the pay of the Nazi government; but one may most certainly suppose that Hitler must be laughing up his sleeve at the ex-Colonel's rendering such valuable softening work for him in the United States without compensation.

So far as Hitler ever declares war on anybody, he has already declared war on us. Foreign agents of totalitarian governments, move freely among us, immune from arrest, in most instances, because of their official status. If for no other reason, the rumors and suspicions of sabotage of American preparedness for defence in the disgraceful irruptions of strikes, explosions, and forest fires, may be craftily interpreted by Nazi rationalizers as an opportunity for the aggressors to occupy us for our own "protection". And he does not have to send an invading fleet, army, or battalion of bombers to achieve this benevolent design. Enough Nazi agents are probably already here to direct to designed action for totalitarian interests the well-wishing isolationists, obstructionists, and passivists of American birth and ancestry.

We did not want to get into this war. We don't want to get into it even now. But there come conditions in every man's life, and in every nation's life, when he or it discovers that we live in a world not made for us. Then is the moment in which intelligence quickly works, if there is intelligence. We may adapt and direct—and in that way control!—what we did not originate or initiate. The United States is in that condition now.

We are already in the battle. Are we wishy-washy? One day we shout "Peace!" The next, we cry out mightily against German atrocities. We are, nevertheless, not so undecided, undetermined, unsettled as our newspapers and radios would let foreigners suppose. Americans are not apathetic to the dangers our country faces—not even Mr. and Mrs. Lindbergh! Passivists, who call themselves "pacifists", too are keenly aware of these imminent disasters; but their proposals lend themselves chiefly to the "softening" process, ingeniously devised and manipulated by totalitarian governments which have a short and easy way with passivists or pacifists.

Enemies of Democracy exploit its privileges and its institutions to corrupt, debilitate, and demoralize Democracy itself. Totalitarian agents assure us there is no danger to us. Totalitarian dictators do not believe in documents and when they sign them, they are scraps of paper. But, believing in our own institutions, we are morally bound to put legally into words the fact that Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and Matsuoka have in their ways declared war on us.

*by Arthur Blair*

## MEDITATION ON A SKULL

Evening eyes throw acid on this skull;  
light is buried in infinity:  
romps among the stars and future wars.  
Dissolution and despair, cursed by us,  
grind into the brittle dust.

You lack introspection: objective knowledge  
(kindred with the gods) is your forte.  
But expression!—expression is desire:  
and there is no method of destruction  
without the word to formulate your fate.

Narcissis is the motive when no birth  
follows death: when desire is curbed  
as passion. Stillborn within divinity,  
you lack complexity: are therefore evil.  
As the evening attitude is evil.

No stains: dead white. Utilized by eyes  
as, staring, they reflect past futile passions,  
visualize you simple purity.  
Virginity is the fashion: without doom  
to sterilize our aspect of damnation.



*by William Orton*

## PIERS PLOWMAN WALKS AGAIN A NOTE ON THE MALVERN CONFERENCE

THREE cathedrals guard the valley of the middle Severn. North and south Worcester and Gloucester hold the left bank, with Hereford over the hills twenty miles westward like a spearhead aimed at the Welsh marches; and between them lies some of the loveliest land and the oldest culture in Britain. All three Sees are related to Saxon origins. The Benedictines came here early and endured. With Saint Ethelred, as it were, leading the advance on paganism, Christ and Our Lady on one flank and Saint Peter on the other held a defensive line against ever-resurgent barbarism from the east—a line that sheltered more than once in a thousand years the Crown and the Faith of England. In the middle of this triangle rests Malvern—or rather, the Malverns, for there are four of them: the Great and the Little, the Link and the Wells—backed up against the strong and solitary hills, looking east across the valley to the Cotswolds, straggling upward here and there to catch a glimpse of the Welsh mountains and a breath of the sea.

Here, at Malvern College, in the bleak January of 1941, gathered the advance guard of the Church of England: William Temple, Archbishop of York, twenty-three bishops, some three dozen deans, archdeacons and other dignitaries, and about two hundred clerical and lay delegates. For three days they shivered, prayed, argued and resolved; and their conference aroused an unexpected echo across the death-strewn ocean. *TIME* Magazine rendered great service to American Christians by giving a generous account of it; and that account stirred an amazing interest. The conference was in no sense official, as the Archbishop was careful to point out; the twenty-three bishops were only one-third of the total (though by far the most influential part); the findings have not been endorsed by the established Church as a

whole, and are not likely to be: yet they have been widely acclaimed as the most significant thing to come out of that Church in a generation. Perhaps the circumstances had something to do with it—they were dramatic enough; perhaps American Christianity was waiting for a lead; perhaps the conference concerned itself much less with the new war on Germany than with the old war on paganism, considering that the more fundamental. And perhaps it was just the fact that the Church of England, or part of it, had borne such surprising fruit in such bitter weather.

## II

Many people who knew none too much about it had come to consider that Church moribund—the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual vacuum. As the official guarantor of the respectability, if not of Englishmen, at least of the English state, the Church had tended to become a celestial alibi for whatever the conservative party saw fit to accomplish: a position not without perquisites. J. M. Murry wrote recently “the Church knows its place, which is that of a good wife to the state. Like a good wife it never advises and never criticises, and when there is a row it stands up for its husband”. A good deal to the same effect was said (the verb is too mild) at Malvern. Dorothy Sayers denounced the preoccupation of the official moralists with private and personal vices as a cheap and easy evasion of the difficult and dangerous assault on avarice and corruption in public life. Seldom has an Archbishop listened to harsher words than those of the leading liberal M. P., Sir Richard Acland:

For over a hundred and fifty years you have neglected your duty . . . because of sheer funk. The whole structure of society is, from the Christian point of view, rotten and must permanently frustrate your efforts to create for the individual the possibility of a Christian life. This has given Hitler the opportunity for saying ‘To hell with the whole order’ . . . He said this, and from despairing humanity he wrung forth a tremendous and dynamic response. . . . You must be prepared to offend people who are determined to preserve the existing order.

The resolutions passed by the conference, with the active sponsorship of Dr. Temple, can hardly fail to do this; but before con-

sidering them it must be recalled that the line of criticism represented above is only half the story.

Religious thought in the present century has undergone a tremendous renaissance: particularly in Roman and Anglo-Catholic circles, because in these the theological and institutional continuity of the religious life is more fully realized, both as challenge and point of departure. It is doubtful if any sphere of intellectual achievement can muster such a roll-call as that which includes Maritain, Gilson, Berdyaev, Dawson, Figgis, A. E. Taylor, A. J. Carlyle, Belloc, Chesterton, Gore, Noyes, Eliot, Knox, Scott Holland, Windle, Reckitt, Eric Gill—to mention only a few of the better-known names from the other side of the water. Looking back, one will not find it difficult to discern the mainspring of this renaissance. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, scientific criticism, especially of the German school, was attacking the religious position in what seemed at the time to be a devastating onslaught; but the net effect was rather that of a flail upon the grain. A lot of chaff was thrashed out; but the winnowed heap was good for a wonderful harvest. Then, on the impact of events rather than theories, came the spectacular collapse of dogmatic materialism, with its cloudy phantasms of social “evolution”, necessary “progress”, a hedonistic society, a deterministic universe, a terrestrial millenium based on cheap machinery and the secular state: all products of a false and shallow understanding of man. Down they came, like torrential rain upon the seeded earth; and some good grain was lost in the ensuing flood of folly and despair. But most remained, to fight for its life in a storm-swept world; and what ripened was that which had pushed its roots deepest down into reality.

When Ibsen was an old man, someone tried to commit him to a theory of revolution: “What is needed”, he said, “is a revolution of the spirit of man”. That revolution, and nothing less, is what Catholic religion stands for. It is not primarily a matter of this or that political or economic system. Men of our time have seen, and are seeing, the tyranny that is latent in any system based on a purely secular rationalism. At the lowest level of faith, we find ourselves compelled to act *as if* the supernatural entered the natural order at the human level; because without that assumption the slogans of liberty and democracy become fragile nonsense,

lacking any ultimate rationale. More government is certainly the need of our age; but a planned society means more tyranny or more idolatry if it postulates a merely material man. In the last resort, one has either to worship man or to worship God: the latter is the more reasonable alternative.

But the return to the Christian doctrine of man had embarrassing consequences. It not only undermined the rationalistic liberalism of the nineteenth century; it undermined the popular brands of Fabian and Marxist socialism too. Bishop Gore wrote twenty years ago: "If there is no change of spirit among men, the class war might proceed to revolution and to the victory of the proletariat, but it would not really ameliorate the lot of men or give them liberty. It would only substitute a bureaucratic tyranny for a plutocratic; and a revolution leading to disillusionments would bring reaction!" Accordingly, Gore and a group of men associated with him—sometimes called the Christendom group—took up again the work begun by Maurice and Kingsley half a century before: the task of re-devising a corporate life based on the Christian doctrine of man; and the Malvern conference was an incident in that enterprise. Gore died in 1932, and the history of his work has not yet been written; but it is his lasting glory that when European states, rightly rejecting individualism and social atomism, were devising corporate tyrannies to replace them, his rejection of those heresies was firmly aimed at a corporate life that should preserve the sacred liberties of Christian man.

Similarly in the international sphere, the Anglican group was among the first to attack the roots of current evil. Dr. A. J. Carlyle, the eminent historian of political theory, pointed out in 1922 that "the theory of the absolute sovereignty of the state, which was developed by the eccentric genius of Hobbes and more or less accepted by some jurists in England and America, would have seemed to serious men [of the middle ages] a form of lunacy. . . . The most serious danger of modern society is not, as some very shortsighted critics imagine, the tendency to anarchy, but the desire to find some absolute and final authority. It is the doctrine of absolute authority which is the greatest danger of our time, and it is not less dangerous when it masquerades under the form of democracy." Lord Acton had made the same point a

generation earlier; and it is to be remarked of all this development how fruitful has been the interaction in England between the Roman and the Anglican communities. One may add that while the latter, in sharp contrast to the former, has maintained a latitudinarian attitude toward modernism, the intellectual development has been accompanied, not by a weakening, but by a very marked strengthening, of the devotional life of the Church. Not for three centuries has the spiritual, as well as the intellectual, hold upon the Faith been stronger.

### III

So much of background was needed to remind American readers that the Malvern conference, far from being a sudden or sporadic affair, marks merely a stage on a road that is about a hundred years long; though one may fairly emphasize the number of people who are now going that way. The immediate incentive came from the Industrial Christian Fellowship, whose secretary, P. T. R. Kirk, carries on the Gore tradition, with the active sympathy and support of Dr. Temple; but there was a special reason for action at this time. English Churchmen are well aware that the strength of National Socialism lies not simply in its ideas, or ideals, but in the fact that it has been so thoroughly applied in the day-to-day living of the great mass of the German people; and the Archbishop has been outspoken in demanding that Christian idealism must be made similarly actual and specific, even at the risk of a good deal of dispute about specific proposals.

As a basis for the Malvern proceedings two preliminary documents, mostly in question form, were circulated. One, from the official convening committee of clergy and laity, stated the general theme as follows:

The modern world has for some years past exhibited alarming symptoms of deepseated malady. The attempts of men to achieve their purposes in the natural order appear to involve a tormenting selfproduced contradiction. The effort to supply their economic needs has produced world-wide unemployment; and the intercourse of nations has now, once again, resulted in a gigantic war. There seems to be no escape from what can only be described as a vicious circle.

The statement posed the question, in regard to both domestic

and international spheres, whether the failure was due to inadequate means and resources, moral and intellectual;

or must we admit that 'the system' is so completely governed by ends incompatible with the reality of man's nature that no conceivable modification of it, but only its replacement by something else, can be contemplated as adequate to the community's need?

The other statement, prepared by Sir Richard Acland and his group, answered emphatically Yes to this, and strongly hinted that the "something else" should be based on communal ownership.

Among the ten principal speakers, three—T. S. Eliot, V. A. Demant and Professor Hodges—concerned themselves mainly with doctrine and discipline; three—Sir Richard Acland, J. M. Murry and Miss Sayers—vigorously attacked the inertia and timidity of the Church in social affairs; and the balance represented various approaches to the economic problem, strongly inclining toward guild socialism. There was considerable variation in temper and tactics between the speakers, and a much hotter debate on certain proposals than published accounts have suggested; but the final resolution, accepted unanimously, embodied a real consensus of opinion.

This resolution confirms the position taken at the ecumenical conference of Madras in 1938: namely, that it is not enough to change the individual, but that the social order as such, since it consists of much more than the aggregate of living individuals, constitutes a direct concern of organized Christianity. The resolution condemns the supremacy of the economic motive, especially the disregard of human rights and values entailed by the pursuit of monetary profits. It asserts that human status should not be left to the chance of a fluctuating demand for labor, and claims that "the rights of labor must be recognized as in principle equal to those of capital in the control of industry". A particularly controversial demand is "that the monetary system be so administered that what the community can produce is made available to the members of the community, the satisfaction of human needs being accepted as the only true end of production." The resolution raises—but does not answer—the question "whether a just order of society can be established so long as ownership alone



is a source of income or so long as the resources necessary to our common life are privately owned." A supplementary resolution from the Acland group, accepted *nemine contradicente* after hot discussion, answers this question with an outright condemnation of "that part of the structure of our society by which the ownership of the great resources of our community can be vested in the hands of private individuals." Throughout the resolution—including especially this last section—a consistent, and on the whole convincing, effort is made to base the theorems on definite doctrinal foundations; and certain practical suggestions are included for Christian action to further the objectives set forth.

Touching the issue of the war, the conference (which included at least one prominent pacifist) contented itself with an endorsement of the English prelates' letter to the *Times* of December 21st, 1940. This letter was signed jointly by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and the Moderator of the Free Church Council. It endorses the five peace points enunciated by Pope Pius XII, which are in substance: (1) "the assurance to all nations of their right to life and independence"; (2) disarmament by agreement (3) "some juridical institution" to guarantee, and when necessary revise, international agreements; (4) continuing adjustment of the "real needs and just demands of nations and peoples"; (5) a fuller sense among rulers and peoples of their Christian responsibilities. To these requirements the English prelates added five more, which are brief enough to be quoted in full: "(6) Extreme inequality of wealth should be abolished. (7) Every child, regardless of race or class, should have equal opportunities for education suited to its peculiar capacities. (8) The family as a social unit must be safeguarded. (9) The sense of a divine vocation must be restored to man's daily work. (10) Resources of the earth should be used as God's gifts to the whole human race and used with due consideration for the needs of the present and future generations." This program by adoption thus becomes part of the Malvern report, which was signed by the Archbishop "on behalf of the conference" on January 10th, 1941.

So bare a summary of proposals and resolutions can give no adequate idea of what was in fact the central note of the proceedings. The power of an ancient and vigorous faith can be no

more described than fire or sunlight. Here was bitter cold and deepest gloom: some notion of what it was like can be gathered from the cable report of Jeffrey Mark to *TIME Magazine*<sup>1</sup>:

Chief feature of this last night's discussion was the paralyzing coldness of Malvern College Great Hall, in which all speeches were delivered. It is about eighty yards by forty with no central heating whatsoever, with the upper windows open to allow the escape of smoke from the clerics' pipes, cigars and cigarettes. Chairmen, speakers and audience all wore greatcoats and mufflers. After Eliot's speech the whole conference moved en masse into the cold biting moonlit air, and walked about three hundred yards to the College chapel for midnight service [compline]. The chapel is about the same size and was still colder. It was lit only by four candles and an occasional flash from the college porter's torch, ushering stumbling conferees to their seats. It was quite impossible for each kneeling figure to see his neighbour, and the whole effect was extraordinarily eerie, especially when the congregation sang unaccompanied plainsong in unison.

What they sang was fifteen centuries old. What it meant was light everlasting.

#### IV

American Christians of all denominations responded as if to the news of a victory. The Episcopalians—three hundred and fifty of them—assembled at New Haven in mid-February, convened by the Church League for Industrial Democracy. Thirty-five bishops (about one-third of the active list for the United States) endorsed the meeting, though as very few of them were present they can hardly be quoted as endorsing the results; lay folk included Miss Vida Scudder, Miss Mary Van Kleeck, Mrs. Mary Simkovitch, Mrs. Reinhold Niebuhr, Mr. Spencer Miller, several university and seminary people, and a small but very useful sprinkling of social and settlement workers.

A long day's discussion of the Malvern report, section by section, resulted in a resolution "that the members of the conference endorse the declaration of the Malvern conference in spirit, and in letter so far as it is applicable to our own circumstances." Certain committees were established to start follow-up work, and to

<sup>1</sup>Quoted as received by kind permission of the editors.



bring about a plenary meeting at a later date if possible. The scope of the New Haven discussion ranged far wider than that of Malvern, especially in the field of international politics; Japan, Germany, Russia, India, the Kuomintang, colonial problems, the share-croppers, text-book censorship, free speech, the race problem, conscription of capital, social security, and almost every other topic of interest to reformers were at the least mentioned by one speaker or another; and one paragraph of the Malvern report drew fire. That was the first of the Pope's peace points, which was objected to by several speakers as implying the perpetuation of the system of sovereign nation-states.

To a lay observer, what had apparently incited the American gathering was the boldness of the bid made by the Anglican group for leadership in social reconstruction. There was the trace of an impetus to "climb on the band-wagon". While certain speakers—especially Spencer Miller—emphasized the long background of Christian socialism in England, it was inevitable that the sense of perspective should be less evident in a scene where all that background was report rather than living tradition. Such effort in the United States has indeed made much more than a beginning, but there has been hardly time or experience enough for the toughening and deepening of the spiritual life which is one of its chief rewards. Nor has dogmatic religion as yet undergone those great crises in both secular and ecclesiastical policy that have cost so much, and brought so much, to English churchmen. The New Haven group was somewhat more inclined than the Malvern group to envisage itself as a league of social reformers, somewhat less as a league of catholic Christians; and one was made conscious, by the contrast, of the profound degree to which the civilization of England, the polity of England, its manners and customs—yes, and its faults and follies—the very blood and soil of England, are steeped and hallowed in the tradition of corporate Christianity. England, bloody and blundering old mother of nations, is still a part of Christendom. America has yet to be won.

## V

Were these events taking place on the continent of Europe it would be natural to look for the emergence of a religious party in politics *vis à vis* other parties. That is definitely not the di-

rection of the English endeavour, nor is it likely to be the effective line in this country. In so far as doctrinal Christianity stands *primarily* for a particular social or economic program, other groups can produce other programs and by a simple rejection, or reinterpretation, of the postulates muster a purely political opposition. It would seem that the fundamental task is rather to extend the acceptance of the postulates in the sense in which they are received by the socially conscious minority—and that sense is not merely dialectical. The doctrines, even the dogmas, of the Church have their primary value as mediators of religious experience—of this and other ages—rather than as major premises in a series of syllogisms. The cardinal fact for social policy is that the Christian is a different sort of person from other men, not merely that he has a different program. While the Church rightly concerns itself with the trends of corporate life, and rightly claims their final evaluation, its power to affect them wells ever outward through individual souls. The fact of a growing Christian indignation with the results of secularism and materialism, of an ever-widening desire in individual minds the world over for a return to Christendom, is itself the major event of our time. The cry of *misere* that rises now from millions of broken hearts: the *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, that smites the breast of every honest man: the desperate faith that even this foul scene is not beyond the redeeming power of the eternal Truth—these are the mainsprings of the Christian hope. Let us not assume too readily that that hope will be even partially fulfilled in our time. Long and deep as has been our transgression, so long may be the way of atonement. It is of no use to preach sacrifice to the unrepentant, mercy to the self-righteous, fellowship to the haters, altruism to the avaricious; and while we may discern more or less the outlines of a Christian social order, the power to approach it must remain the church's chief concern.

*by Irene Weir*

## APPASSIONATA

Listen to me—Little Soul Comrade,  
Whom long have I known but only now newly discovered,  
When drifting between continents these long blue days at sea  
Once again I come face to face with you,  
Shy little self whom I love.

Now, I find you are a different being.  
Not the wistful, half shrinking small person  
I knew long ago, when, lone kneeling,  
At dawn on the hillside's bare shoulder  
I wept, longing for love of you.

Now, you are changed, newly blossomed,  
Lovelier, more fair in your selfhood,  
Sensitive, quaintly elusive;  
Flowerlike your delicate fragrance,  
Tremblingly stirred, wonder-eyed,  
Enhaloed with mystical beauty.

Yet—even now, you are not wholly awakened:  
Incomplete, unilluminated, half begotten,  
Unaware of the passion of great love,  
Great love that tears at the vitals,  
That sears, fiercely burning, the heartstrings.

Comrade Soul! Awake now, and show me,  
Transfigured, the face of my longing,  
Intimate part of my being, yet other in birth and in selfhood,  
Without whose revealing compassion  
I am dull with a dull incompleteness.

O my soul, I am now fully awakened,  
Eager to wrestle with love,  
Touch fire, in the flame of its passing,  
My self, my full self to discover,  
The white flame of my being, self transcending.

O Life—before I die, grant me this boon!  
Before I come face to face with the magnificent passion of Death,  
Grant that I discover myself, completely in its naked entirety,  
Then shall I truly live, wholly lost in the passion of Life.

*by Charles Edward Eaton*

### BOISTEROUS BLOOD

Is there a strong brain-lurch toward death,  
A quick heart-twist like the ship's plunge  
In wild seas? O brothers, what is breath  
But the body's reeling, a lunge

Through cloud-banked narrows of the day,  
Across tympanic shoals of hate?  
So yet the boisterous blood squalls say  
That rare and blue-girt islands wait

Beyond the samite sheet of rain;  
O take wind's push into your core  
Arterial surge! We go amain,  
Turning the destined, wave-tossed oar

Toward death's island citadel.  
Heart's careening is heaven-deep;  
Breath is a sail that steers us well  
Into the morning waves of sleep.

by Edward Foster

## A NOTE ON STANDARDS

LORD Byron's vexations in getting along either with, or without, women seem trivial to the literary historian who has attempted to do either with or without standards. Without criteria of judgment which integrate his consideration of the content of a literature, he may compile facts and write sensitive interpretation, but he cannot fully relate his subject to the interests of his own contemporaries. Employing standards, he inevitably runs the risk of mistaking his own prejudices for the edicts of high Jove. It is a nasty dilemma.

To their credit, the scholars in American Literature who are discussing plans for a cooperative history show no tendency to avoid this dilemma. In no less than five recent papers, the integration of this major reappraisal of our literature around a *weltanschauung* has been at least implicitly recognized as desirable.<sup>1</sup>

### I

And so it must be, for the necessity for criteria of judgment stems from the very nature of literature and literary history. Literature is never pure form or pure beauty. Even the poetry of the *fin de siècle* advocates of art for art's sake implies at least one value judgment, that beauty is the *summum bonum*. And the so-called "amorality" of the novels of Theodore Dreiser should be considered not so much as disregard of all ethical values but rather as a confused groping toward a code finely adapted to human beings conceived as bio-chemical organisms. Even in Joyce, there is less chaos than is commonly assumed. However

<sup>1</sup>Harry Hayden Clark, "Suggestions Concerning a History of American Literature"; Yvor Winters, "On the Possibility of a Cooperative History of American Literature" in *AMERICAN LITERATURE*, XII, November, 1940; and the discussion of these papers by Howard Mumford Jones, Willard Thorpe, and Clarence Faust at the December, 1940 meeting of The Modern Language Association in Boston.

strongly he may desire it, the writer cannot escape into a world empty of values and of value judgments. For he must always select one character as typical and significant while he rejects many others; he must always select a limited number of experiences as typical and significant while he rejects many others. This demand for the typical and the significant inevitably forces him back into the realm of values.

Moreover, the writer must impose a pattern upon his selected moments of experience. Even Dos Passos, consciously devoted to the transcription of chaos, is forced to give us a patterned chaos, because it is physically impossible to place pure flux within the covers of a book. Again the writer perforce is drawn back to a system of personal convictions, for the pattern must be partially derived from his estimate of the significance of certain values and the insignificance of others.

Precisely similar is the position of the literary historian as soon as he moves beyond bibliography and the search for facts. He cannot choose the six or seven dominant influences in a writer's development without, consciously or unconsciously, passing judgment upon the worth of those influences. The two Mark Twains presented by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and Mr. Bernard De Voto sufficiently illustrate the way in which value judgments color the treatment of a life. They differ radically because the standards of the two biographers differ radically; Mr. Brooks cringes before the vulgarity and the Mammonism which De Voto takes in his stride. And unless the biographical study is to become a sterile compendium of uninterpreted facts, that process of selection and of reference to standards cannot be escaped.

Though it might seem that the interpretation of the writer's works demands only objectivity and the fullest measure of sympathy, the literary historian, when he reaches the point of writing, is again forced to select and compose. An objective interpretation of the essays of Emerson would be a sensitive and accurate summary of all of them, for on what objective basis could any single essay be excluded? In practice, the scholar must select a limited number of essays for interpretation, and that selective process, as we have seen, implies reference to standards. Moreover, he must contrive a pattern of interpretation; he must single out certain ideas as central in Emerson's thought and perdurably signifi-

cant. But significant in what terms? Again, willy-nilly, he has returned to a system of convictions.

I have ignored the point at which standards are ordinarily assumed to enter the critical process—the final judgment of our writer's contribution to more-or-less permanently valid tradition, aspiration, and experience—because here the argument is simple and incontestable. Without such judgments, weighed in a spirit of deep responsibility, literary history may be amusing, provocative, broadening in its influence; but it can offer little to those who assume that the ideas of the master spirits are or at least can be a powerful force in the contemporary world.

At first glance, it may seem that the historian of ideas has escaped into a *milieu* in which standards have less validity. Intellectual history may trace the development of the concept without passing judgment upon its worth for men and women. Yet even in this province the scholar must select and compose. Back of Professor Parrington's pioneering enterprise lay an ultimate assumption, the validity of Jeffersonian Liberalism, and that assumption has at every point influenced both selection and patterning. Back of Professor Gabriel's *THE COURSE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT* lies another conviction—that religion and ethics are deeply significant areas of thought and experience—and that conviction seems to have influenced both selection and patterning at every point.

The only objective history of American Literature which I can conceive would be a library containing unannotated editions of every book written within these States from the beginnings to the present day, of every book connected in any way with our literary development. These works would be arranged in chronological order and perhaps segregated according to literary types. Could they be reduced to the compass of even a twenty-volume history? Without selection, without recourse to patterning—both processes which imply standards of judgment—the problem would be insoluble. The history of our literature could be nothing less than all of the books.

Practically, ours is not a choice between the employment of standards and objectivity which may dispense with them. It is rather a choice between criteria adopted seriously, critically, and



with full recognition of their importance and, on the other hand, criteria assumed, uncriticized, and casually applied.

## II

If it be granted that adequate literary history cannot be written without reference to standards, the major question still remains: how can the individual scholar transcend prejudice and hew out a system of convictions for which he can claim a measure of finality?

So stated, the question admits only one answer. Lacking omniscience (what distinguished scholar would claim it?), he cannot for himself evolve thoroughly sound standards. I state this truism because it is frequently ignored in such discussions as I have come upon. Too often it is inferred that the advocate of standards tacitly assumes his own ability to wring order out of chaos and to achieve something like philosophical finality. Speculation on the problem is futile unless it can be viewed in pragmatic terms; we seek not finality but the most useful knowledge, the most useful ideas, the most useful convictions now open to the inquiring mind. To be sure, the shrewdest formulation of the decade 1940-50 will seem faintly ludicrous to our successors of even twenty or thirty years hence. But should that thought discourage our generation from an attempt to reach its tallest intellectual stature?

These tentative notes on a procedure for establishing standards are, then, written for those who distrust absolutes yet feel the need for criticism and literary history which deal firmly with the fundamental ideas expressed in great books.

1. A standard should have historical validity. To a considerable degree, it should be a distillation of the ideas, the attitudes, the traditions evolved within this nation during its three-hundred year development. To be sure, the American ideology is not completely formulated—perhaps it never will be—but recent general and literary historians have certainly established its foundations. The leading concepts are defined; much of their historical development has been traced; we have passed beyond that day when it was necessary to cram all of the thought and feeling of



the nation into such crude terms as "Puritanism", "Romanticism", "Realism", "the Frontier", and the like.

2. A standard should be related to the great tradition of Western Civilization. In so far as European ideas have actually molded American living, they will be reflected in the first aspect of our criteria. But, as the Humanists have cogently urged, we might have learned more from Greek Civilization than we have in fact; certainly we have long needed the Greek conception of wholeness and harmony of spirit. Surely it is desirable to avoid provinciality by admitting some infusion of dangerously neglected aspects of the Great Tradition.

3. A standard should take into account the finest human insights of all related disciplines. That is not to say that the literary historian should attempt the impossible; it is obviously impractical to urge that we should all become competent biologists, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, and social scientists. Must we then accept the superficiality of outlines and cheap popularizations? I think not.

We are seeking human insights for the enrichment and the correction of our own convictions. Now in spite of their impressive masses of specialized research, their vast formulations of facts, and their minute scrutinies of method, the related disciplines frequently provide only a rather limited range of human insights. And if one holds his purpose firmly in mind, it is not too difficult to run down the desired knowledge. Our subject is always the individual and his long quest for the good life. We are always seeing the individual and his demand for love and friendship and a place in the community, the individual and his trust or distrust of the State, the individual and his urge to feel at home in the universe and with God. At the crests of related subjects are answers—sometimes trustworthy—to the questions which literature is forever posing.

How to reach that crest? The trick, I am told, is to pick the right minds, to choose of one's colleagues the five or six who have genuinely philosophical views of their own subjects, to question endlessly, and to read the books at the top of the subject which they can suggest. Curiously, these books "at the top of the subject" are frequently pat for our purpose. John Maurice Clark of Columbia is considered one of the first three of American econ-

omists. Though written for economists rather than the general public, his PREFACE TO SOCIAL ECONOMICS is at once readable and definitely important for any literary historian called upon to interpret tendencies of economic and social thought in the last century, for it contains a brilliant *reductio ad absurdum* of the axioms of classical economics. Needless to say, Professor Clark dismisses that baneful abstraction, "Economic Man", and writes of the human being as he is known to the man of letters. In all related subjects, one can come upon minds of this order: the specialists are disentangling themselves from their long preoccupation with the less and less; they are writing that which must be known by every serious critic or literary historian.

4. A standard should be eclectic. Perhaps that suggestion will seem a contradiction in terms, for the devotee of standards often seems to be a critic prone to wave aside large aspects of thought and experience which the relativist would consider important; he is, in short, rigid and narrow rather than eclectic. I prefer to believe that adequate criteria can be based only on a literal reading of Terence's much-quoted dictum, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*. *Nihil*, as I translate, means *nothing*, quite definitely nothing. How can I take sides with either Humanists or Marxists? How can I read our literature and deny the influence of religion and morality? How can I refuse to recognize the significance of the class struggle when Madison clearly noted it in 1787? The clarity and coherence won by dismissing refractory facts and tendencies has little permanent value.

5. A standard should be self-consistent—to a degree. The phrasing is intentionally humble, for this is our most exacting demand. To be sure, one could fall back upon one of the pure types of philosophy—upon either idealism or naturalism—and then wrench and twist all materials until they somehow fitted into the selected pattern. The result might be a fairly useful personal philosophy, but it would be almost worthless as a system of criteria for judging that vast chaos of ideas and experiences which is our literature. And obviously it would do violence to such aspects of the standard as were derived historically.

<sup>9</sup>One might well include at this point the "twelve southerners" of I'LL TAKE MY STAND, for their poetic agrarianism burgeons as something not unlike an economic, social, and literary synthesis.

Perfect consistency is not to be expected. About all that one can ask is as much coherence as is achieved by the Pragmatism of William James, the Instrumentalism of John Dewey, or the Realism of R. B. Perry. If we content ourselves with such consistency, we shall find that our standards are about what they should be—always well above the shabbiest aspects of our life and literature, always well below the dreamer's imagined Utopia.

### III

As I glance through these suggestions, I am rather terrified by the amount and the difficulty of the mental labor indicated. Inwardly I cringe in fear that some one might say, "Young man, you have described the process. Now it is for you to carry it out!"

Actually, however, we are all in the midst of this process all the time. So sharp is the impact of events upon our prejudices and our too easy assumptions that we are remodeling our standards—consciously or unconsciously—almost from day to day. I have been saying in effect only this: nothing short of a large synthesis will serve our purposes, and that large synthesis is desperately needed.

The possible reward? Sensing the humble position of letters in the modern world, I dare not imagine a result more striking than the production of literary history of a certain firmness and intellectual thrust. And who reads literary history? But a distinguished bacteriologist, the late Dr. Hans Zinsser, writing out of remarkably catholic experience and insight, has invited us to accept a bolder estimate of our province.

He stood before the problem [of a 'sick world'] as he often stood at the bedside of a dangerously sick patient, helplessly hoping for greater physicians to point the way of cure. He looked to art, literature, and criticism as the instruments through which this might come. For it seemed to him that what had happened was that mankind had been so busy planting the potatoes and corn and turnips of life that it had forgotten to tend the gardens. And now it had no gardens in the enjoyment of which it could find the reasons for which it had planted the potatoes and turnips. For the arts and the spiritual values which they represent . . . had come to be regarded as trivial and not worthy of the efforts of serious

men, a speculative commodity like stocks or postage stamps for rich collectors or playthings for amateurs and eccentric incompetents . . . .

It was this, the reënthronement of art in its broadest significance as an important, vital guardian and guide of the objectives of progress which alone could cure . . . And might it not—if it could move arm in arm with science [may I add religion, philosophy, and the social sciences?]<sup>9</sup>—give direction and harmonious dignity to the new powers for happiness that science provides?"

*by Virginia Berry*

### UNIMPASSIONED PRINT

As if you left your dancing footprints here—  
Carved from some moment of the minuet,  
Fastened within these mirrors, fresh and clear—,  
I find the souvenirs of you, 'Toinette:  
The tinkling laughter of a shepherdess,  
A handkerchief you dropped at blindman's buff,  
Tears of a little girl in loneliness,—  
And suddenly the mind is not enough.  
So do you run between me and the page  
Wherein I seek the unimpassioned print;  
So do your little jewelled hands, in rage,  
Flutter against my eyes and gleam and glint;  
And so you ask me for my verdict when  
I ride the tumbril with L'Autrichienne!

<sup>9</sup>Hans Zinsser, *AS I REMEMBER HIM*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1940, pp. 423-24.

*by Virginia Berry*

### NO PUBLIC THING

It is your grief, no public thing, you bear.  
It being not mine at all, how could I accost you,  
Lay wanton hands on your heart, request to share  
The reticent, Pain? No, not if I lost you  
To ready and clamorous tongues, to prying hands.  
I will defend your quivering heart—not ravish,  
To ease the lust of pity's crude demands.  
Because my love is excessive, prodigal, lavish:  
I will be sparing with the word endearing,  
Though I do violence to my longing tongue;  
I will stand back from you—hoping and fearing,  
My yearning hands and heart twisted and wrung—,  
That for yourself you may, when night is clearing,  
Discover where the morning star is hung.

### PORTRAIT: 1860-70

Magnolias heavy on the moonlit night,  
Up from the cabins, low, a darky tune,  
A man's lips touching fingers frail and white—  
All yours, milady. But the moon sets soon,  
The dawn is grey with ragged marching men,  
The formula is lost, the magic fled—  
And useless fingers find their uses when  
They sort the living from the rotting dead.  
Make your own terms, Life, hold her to them surely,  
Give her a weapon she has never used:  
The hands that swept the harpsichord demurely  
Will beat you fairly, callous-palmed and bruised.  
You will not raze this delicate defying,  
This banner tattered but this banner flying.

*by Virginia Berry*

## CAUTION TO MAECENAS

Shoes on her bare white feet, her bright hair fettered,  
You would make a lady of her at dangerous last,  
You would take her in from the road, this wise, this unlettered  
Maid with the vagabond past.

She is hungry and you would feed her, and I would bless you;  
Her thin young body is cold and you have a fire.  
But ah, beware! lest in the end she distress you:  
Not bread alone is her need, her soul's desire.

For she has gone lean and wild so long, remember—  
With the sky for Patria and the stars for flags  
Over the open road where she curls in slumber,  
A spent and lovely child in rags.

She is so used to the casual coin men fling her—  
Pausing to listen where the highway meets her lane—,  
Yet she is so fleet, so prompt and elusive to sing her  
Way from the hands that profane.

Beware, lest you market and barter her virginal beauty,  
Lest you make her alluring and wanton in gold and brocade,  
Bewildered at night as Philistines interpret her duty,  
Sobbing her heart out in the dawn, betrayed.

*by Virginia Berry*

## NORWAY

Wind-worn and weather-wise, the shrewd old peasant  
Stands in his doorway, staring at the sky  
Where starlight spills upon the rime at present  
The sun will be his brother by and by.  
So: the hard spring, his hardy sons around him,  
Wrestling with soil which does not wish to yield—  
Until the harvest heaps the barns that bound him,  
And there he stands, viewing the vanquished field.  
Perhaps in old, lost runes some word for Thor  
May spell in syllables exact and striking  
This land's true name, where naught but passion or  
Repentance dares defy this later Viking  
Whom naught but that tall talisman, the Rood,  
Can put upon his knees in servitude.

by Harry Slochower

## FREUD AND MARX IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

CONTEMPORARY literature is the imaginative record of contemporary alienation. To the extent that the imaginative faculty prevents complete identification with immediacy, man has always felt a certain estrangement. However, the momentous displacements of our own time have produced unique and fateful disassociations. They have furnished the Ahasuerian theme, dealing with man, exiled or estranged from his rooted traditions.

The modern formulation of the problem was made by Hegel and Marx. Hegel's dialectic dealt with alienation mainly in its metaphysical structure. Marx considered it from the economic and social perspective. Neither was especially concerned with alienation as a psychological phenomenon. Schopenhauer, and particularly Nietzsche, moved nearer to this aspect of the question in their preoccupation with the logic of the illogical, and in the importance they attached to the non-rational and irrational processes. But both, Schopenhauer in particular, neglected the sociologic concomitant of metaphysical and psychic dismemberment. This is also true of Heidegger's concept of *Sorge* in our own time. Today, approaches are being made toward viewing alienation as an entity encompassing the sociologic, metaphysical, and psychologic.

In the past, the coupling of Freud and Marx was considered a heresy in either camp. Contradictions were seen between the materialism of the one, and the dream-content of the other, between the concern with mass-groups by the one, and with unique individuality by the other. Marxism, it was maintained, sees concrete and particular conditions as determining factors, whereas psychoanalysis draws on universal complexes and traumas for explanations. The one is concerned with hard politics, the other with the "poetic" visions of the mind.



Now, to be sure, the two movements differ. And, when extremists in both camps tend to set up one-to-one correspondences, these differences pass over into contradictions. So interpreted, Freudianism means that the instinctive and the conscious are grounded in a fixed nature which is "natively" and ineradicably abnormal. Here, psychoanalysis means not merely the cognizance of the irrational, but its apotheosis, not merely the consideration of the night-life of the mind, but the revelling in this night-life with perpetual postponement of the morning. To be sure, Freud's earlier emphasis provided a basis for this when he characterized art as "illusion" and "substitute gratification", in which man charts his frustrated reality in dream-forms, and when he tended to castigate consciousness as a distortion of man's instinctive state. Corresponding to this emphasis, we have our literature of the "Riders of the Night", dealing with the "remembrance" of pathological things, which are not merely "past", but appear eternally recurrent. In this literature, the night is discovered, only to be embraced as the ultimate reality. Here, the deviation, the diseased and "the naughty" become "Things in themselves", not stages on the road, but final pits. In this literature of regression, Freudianism becomes the justification of bohemian "*Freude*", if the pun may be permitted. Stylistically, this looseness found form in the "stream of consciousness", or the break-up of language into free association. This language was to communicate the "inner" Reality by dream-signs, dots and dashes. Impressionistic, expressionistic, and surrealist rituals were practiced by philological priests who labored to avoid traditional syntax and grammar. It ought to be noted that this extreme psychological occupation combines a thorough determinism in the assumption of a fixed human nature, with an equally thorough libertarianism, in the added assumption that this nature really lies beyond the range of reason; hence the imagination and language can freely disport themselves in an attempt to communicate it.

A similar situation obtains for Marxism interpreted as mechanical materialism establishing as one-to-one correspondence between the material base and the cultural superstructure. The literary counterpart of this approach is the novel or drama which has everything but characters, individuation, and human situations.

Such were many "documentary" works presenting forces, movements, "objective" conditions with characters reduced to anonymous pawns. In literary criticism, this approach judged scientific method to consist in showing that a work did or did not exhibit historical materialism, the class struggle, and the dialectic resolution. The how of art was slighted in this emphasis, as well as in that of purely psychoanalytic criticism of art. Both the Freudian and the Marxian interpretations of this kind were themselves conditioned by the very alienation of our era which they set out to treat.

However, it may be questioned whether such emphases are just to larger implications of the two movements. If Marxism holds to strict determinism, it could not very well maintain that "men make their own history", nor could it call for a "free" society. Likewise, if for Freud, the instincts and consciousness were ontologically rooted in a permanent frame, man would be bound to an eternal inferno of complexes and Freudianism, as a therapeutic and medicinal doctrine would be impossible. The point we wish to suggest in this paper is that, in their broader meanings, Freud and Marx are compatible, perhaps even complementary to each other, and that a fusion of them offers fruitful possibilities in art and criticism. In the interest of wider discussion, we are using the terms "Freud" and "Marx" as approximations of the psychology and the sociologic categories (as suggested by such writers as Kurt Lewin, Karen Horney, Kenneth Burke), rather than as representing merely the specific theories of these two men.

## II

We might begin by noting that both schools are concerned with disease in modern civilization, manifested in alienation, to use our key-term. The one deals with alienation resulting from sociologic unemployment or misemployment, the other with alienation issuing from psychological un- or mis-employment. And both attempt to *analyze* the maladjustment, the sociologic analysis traces the "superstructure" of culture to its material social base. The clinical method of psychoanalysis follows a similar curve. For, it attempts to explain the "superstructure" of neuroses and of dreams by tracing them down to the actual experiences and back-

ground of the individual and the family. Unlike disassociationists like MacDougal, Freud sees a continuity between experience and the dream, and his approach seeks to discover the connection between the mind and the body. This relation to dialectic materialism is brought even closer when we note that, for Freud, neuroses are a result of suppression, and that suppression is induced by the Super-Ego, which is the symbol of authority. That is, Freud traces "civilization and its discontents" to the conflict between desire and "the law". His thesis that neuroses are a consequence of repressions is the psychological equivalent of the notion that social and personal disharmony result from suppression by social authorities. Indeed, the later work of Freud supplements the individual instance by drawing on general cultural and even social phenomena.

The dialectic interaction which Freud saw between instinct and consciousness made possible his faith in the value of *analysis*. And, as against the irrationalists who would lead man back to the womb of the night, Freud's central motivation is to lead man *through* the darkness, to bring that which is hidden into *consciousness*. Freud aims at the "organization of the id", at rationalizing the irrational, at making the unconscious conscious, in the interest of leading man to freedom. This approaches the Marxian formulation of freedom as cognizance of necessity.

But, it is asked, what of Freud's concept of regression? Can infantilism and Father-imitation be reconciled with Marxism? We think it can, if Marxism is not interpreted as absolute change, as the eternal becoming of a pragmatic futurism, but as a philosophy of Substance. For Marxism also points back, namely towards primitive society, the pre-historic classless order in which labour was not a commodity and where man was not depersonalized by a money- and machine-technique. Marxism points back in order to point ahead; but it points ahead by pointing back.

Both movements deal, then, with the basic insecurity behind the apparent stability of our civilization. One might go further and suggest an analogy in their ultimate objectives. Marxism envisages the stage in which authority will be harmonious with individual expression in which the State, as an instrument of oppression, will "wither away". Freud's work has been towards har-

monizing human wants ("wishes") with the authority of the "censor", to approach the condition in which the "interests" of the id will not clash with the code of the Super-Ego. To borrow a bold formulation suggested by Mr. Edmund Weil, Freudianism aims at the "withering away" of the Super-Ego, as an agent exercising coercion over the Id and the Ego. "Where Id was, shall be Ego", writes Freud. And Thomas Mann closes his essay, "Freud and the Future", by comparing Freud's cultural labour (which Freud himself likens to the draining of the Zuider Zee) with Faust's social vision of "standing amid free folk on a free soil".

### III

Our attempt has been to show that, despite their different accents, Freud and Marx employ a similar strategy and follow related pursuits, that, at any rate, each offers a contribution which the other can employ and thereby complete their respective patterns. In an article, "Freud and the Analysis of Poetry", Kenneth Burke states the relationship neatly. The two, writes Burke, can put their theories together

by an over-all theory of the drama itself, . . . since Freud gives us the material of the closet drama, and Marx the material of the problem play, the one worked out in terms of personal conflicts, the other in terms of public conflicts.

A fruitful concatenation of the psychologic and the sociologic in art may be illustrated by the work of Andre Malraux and of Thomas Mann, although the phenomenon is not confined to these writers.

Malraux's three major novels, *MAN'S FATE*, *DAYS OF WRATH*, and *MAN'S HOPE*, are all concerned with historic events, that is, with objective phenomena, and, in each, social forces determine the action and passion of the characters, and give point to the dramatic situations. Yet, in each novel, particularly in *MAN'S FATE*, Malraux introduces characters of such heroic stature that they cannot completely identify themselves with the collective issue. His actors tower over the situation. The element of individual uniqueness is never wholly submerged by the collective interest. This appears on the political plane, as well, in that Kyo

in *MAN'S FATE* and Kassner in *DAYS OF WRATH* are shown as not in full accord with the decisions and tactics of their party. Malraux's accent in *MAN'S FATE* is on the psychological agony of the individual which issues from the "exposure" of that which cannot be protected by the collective netting. The novel deals with the differential between the organized group and the unique self which cannot be completely coordinated. Hence, great inner loneliness pervades every character. Each strives to bridge this apartness, Ferral and Clappique mainly through sexual communication, Gisors through the pantheistic immersion offered him by opium. In Ch'en, the anguish produced by his anarchistic separateness is so deep that he seeks to abolish it by completest communication offered by death. His attempted murder of the Chinese leader is planned as much with a view to his enemy's destruction as it is to his own death.

In Kyo, Malraux raises the problem of identification to its highest frame of reference. Kyo's individuality finds expression on a dual plane: in his rebellion against the existing form of communality, embodied in the static Chinese society, and, to some extent, in his deviation from the strategy of his own revolting group. On the positive plane, Kyo identifies himself with a futuristic goal, that is with a communality in the making. In this way, Kyo can combine his individual with his communal strains, his ethics with politics, his free will with social determinism.

Still, the major note remains on isolation and on communication by regression. In Ch'en's opening act, Malraux sounds the theme of masochistic Eros straining towards Thanatos. And when Kyo passes the cyanide among his comrades, he finds solace and courage in the socialization of death.

Theme of communication achieved by depersonalization is carried to its extremest pole in *DAYS OF WRATH*. If in *MAN'S FATE*, the emphasis is on the differential, here it is on the integral. In this novel, communication is rendered thorough by thorough submergence, from Kassner's denial of his identity, to the self-denying acts of the prisoner spelling out "Genosse", the anonymous link binding them, to the one who gives himself in Kassner's stead. To be sure, Malraux distinguishes between the collectivity of the Nazi prison and that of the communal meeting place in

free Prague. It is this difference which foreshadows his enlarged theme in *MAN'S HOPE*.

*MAN'S HOPE* attempts to fuse the narcissistic and the authoritative. The novel begins with the anarchic individualism expressive of the unorganized defense at the beginning of the Spanish war. This stage of "play" gives way to conscious planning. The Apocalypse, we read, becomes "organized". (We cannot but think at this point of Freud's "organization of the Id".) The scene in which the peasant, the anonymous representative of the naive agrarian State, goes up into an aeroplane, together with the triumphant funeral march of the peasants carrying the dead and wounded aviators, becomes the high symbolic representation of this fusion.

However, Malraux continues to emphasize the basic psychological residue even in this novel. Economically speaking, there was no difference between the anarchists and the socialists. Yet, there was a difference in their social psychology. To explain this difference, a *psychology* of politics is needed. And once, again, solitude and alienation are inescapable, especially to the intellectual and the artist. For all action is manichean, that is, it must be in some one direction, and in that way, it must exclude other possibilities. But the intellectual and the artist must be "anti-manichean". Malraux raises the distinction between the temporal dialectics of action and the simultaneous dialectic of art and philosophy. Hence, Garcia says: "For a thinker, the revolution's a tragedy. But for such a man, life, too, is tragic. And if he is counting on the revolution to abolish his private tragedy, he's making a mistake—that's all."

Space permits only a sketchy discussion of Thomas Mann's work in this context. The theme of alienation has long been central in this writer. Mann is deeply steeped in Schopenhauer's sleepless voluntarism and Wagner's musical estrangements; he has acknowledged his relation to Nietzsche's metaphysics of disease and to Freud's disclosure of the chthonic forces in man. The psychology of art and of the artist has ever been Mann's concern. The post-war period awakened Mann to the sociologic compulsions. His story of Joseph is an approximation of an interaction between these coordinates.

The Joseph story is a psychology of the myth. The myth points



to the permanent sources of man's communal heritage. Here, Mann offers a kind of Freudian charting of man's ancestral roots, of his infantile stage. But it is a *psychology* of the myth, or an analysis of the communal unconscious. And in Jacob's son, Joseph, Mann introduces the element of individual consciousness. Joseph begins in the narcissistic stage where he regards himself as the center of the universe which he treats as the playground for his "free" dreams. But this antithetical relation of Joseph's ego-centrism to the collective grouping of Leah's sons begins to be resolved in the pit into which he is thrown by the brothers. In Egypt, Joseph further develops a sense of interdependence. Here, he faces the opposite danger, that of falling into the new pit of complete identification with his Egyptian milieu, incorporated by Potiphar's wife, Mut. He is saved from this by "the Face of his Father". The Eros of his own communal roots preserves him from the false Eros of the Egyptian Circe, with its urge towards death and destruction. In terms of the story's social plane, Joseph becomes aware of the rights of the others, remains true to his master, Potiphar, and to his own parental heritage. We know from Mann's plans that Joseph is to employ his gifts to engage in social work, useful to the many. In the seven lean years, he is to become "The Nourisher" of the people, to use Mann's announced title of the next volume. In this final stage, Joseph becomes the representation of the great personality expending itself in communal labour, while conscious of psychic abysses. In the end, he will be reunited with his father, and thus the circle is to close. Yet, as in Malraux, alienation remains a final residuum. Mann's characters are ever fated to fall into pits, play with the forbidden. And these Biblical characters are wanderers, driven from their homes. Once again, we have the story of man, of modern man in particular, in the state of exile.

#### IV

In *SCIENCE AND SANITY*, Korzybsky writes of three periods in history: the Greek with its emphasis on the observer, the scientific with its stress on the observed, and our own time attempting a symbiosis of the two. This seems to be borne out by the theory of relativity in science and by corresponding movements in phil-

osophic and critical thought. It seems to us that the groping towards an organic union of the sociologically observed and the psychological observer tends in the same direction. The step forward, however, would seem to require a look backwards in the interests of closing the circle. This appears to be the import of "substance" thinking in our time. This may be involved in the Father-Mother themes of contemporary literature, embodied in characters such as Molly Bloom, H. C. Earwicker, Jacob, and the Lotte of Mann's *THE BELOVED RETURNS*. Here also belongs the vogue of mythical themes today. However, to repeat, it is, "regression" with a difference. And the difference makes for alienation. But alienation is completely tragic only if it precludes reintegration. And reintegration is excluded only if the new is regarded as completely out of gear with the old. Consciousness brings disassociation. But it also makes possible the transposition of totemism where the individual achieved group identification by magic ritual into forms made necessary by the fact that man has been driven out of his paradisaical condition.



by Edwin Berry Burgum

## LITERARY FORM

### SOCIAL FORCES AND INNOVATIONS

CERTAIN novelties in the structure of contemporary literature, especially the fiction and the drama of common life, point, I believe, to the emergence of a new literary form. It is premature to speak too confidently about it because it has not yet been exemplified in enough works of literature to permit us to regard it as firmly established. If it should become established, the fact would be of great importance since there have been very few changes historically in the dominant patterns of western literature.

I am speaking of patterns that go deeper than mere mechanisms of verse form or division into acts, or even the larger categories of drama and epic. They go deeper indeed than the conceptions of tragedy and comedy themselves. For these larger patterns are determined by the *mores* of society. They are the direct reflection of the basic actual patterns of human conduct.

We get a clue to their definition from the clarity with which Greek tragedy illustrates the dominance of a particular esthetic form in the sense in which I am using the word. The structure of the *Oedipus*, for instance, is determined by the Greek belief in eternal law. It was a sin to kill one's father and to have children by one's mother; and such sins must be atoned for. The suspense in the *Oedipus* comes from the spectators' awaiting the discovery by Oedipus of what they already know. The poignancy of the play lies in the hero's voluntary submission to punishment as soon as he realizes the nature of his sin. Its dramatic power cumulates from the harmony between its psychology and its philosophy. Its esthetic worth is inextricably involved with its practical value as propaganda for conformity to the dominant norms of Greek conduct. Similarly, Prometheus, though he improved man's lot by bringing fire to the earth, has revolted against divine

authority, and for his revolt has been sentenced to eternal torment. The idea of progress is buried under the idea of static authority. Greek drama rejects the ideal of relativity: the notion that any competition between two eternal laws might end in a stalemate was abhorrent to the Greek sense of form. It may be true that many dramatic plots reflect the tension in Greek society between a decaying primitive *mores* and a newer morality. My point is that the plays, in accepting the new morality as right, do not hesitate to reach a definite conclusion. Indeed, the Greek practice of keeping their plots simple, upon which Aristotle insists, was intended to remove the possibility of confusion and to thrust the particular instance into firm clear subordination to the general rule. We may call the form that results a "closed" structure of composition. The guilty exception to what is defined as right practice is punished and disposed of; and eternal law flows on in all its grandeur.

The same form is loosely exemplified in the earlier Greek epic. Although war may legitimately interfere, a man should normally be the active head of his family. Ulysses, after a justifiable violation of this norm in obedience to the higher exceptional law of service to the race in war, returns to his responsibilities in Ithaca. The difficulties on the way are not of a nature to invoke a tragic conclusion. The more serious difficulty of Penelope's retaining both her own virtue and her husband's rule during his absence is relegated to a single episode and obscured by Ulysses' scattering the suitors and the general flush of homecoming. What would for us be the center of attention, the conflict between the two laws, is glossed over by the mechanical application of the closed structure, and plot is lost in mere succession of episodes. The structural difficulties of Greek comedy, which even Aristotle seems to have been unable to cope with, arose from the same source that made tragedy dominant, the rigid conception of drama as a conservative social discipline to maintain respect for eternal law. When this conception was relaxed, as in Aristophanes, when the closed form was laid aside, in the moral holiday of comedy, the Greeks could not achieve a similar compactness of structure. When serious general laws were not violated, the presentation of life

tended to become the picture of an amusing flux of events, without inner logic or apparent direction.

When the culture of the classic past was revived during the English Renaissance, these latent structural defects which I have found outside the field of tragedy, in Aristophanes and in the *Odyssey*, reappear within the realm of tragedy itself. Elizabethan tragedy violates the closed form of the Greek while it melodramatically purports to imitate it. The practice of killing off everybody of importance at the end of a tragedy although pedantically justified by the precedent of Seneca gives only the appearance of closed form; gives it quantitatively to conceal the qualitative violation. *Hamlet* is a prime instance. Virtually everybody is dead, except a minor character who emerges as the new ruler of Denmark. But it would be idle to say that eternal law has been upheld to universal satisfaction. The conflict which seems today most clear and interesting is left a muddle; the conflict between Hamlet's identification with his guilty uncle (his hatred for his father because of his own love for his mother) and his traditional duty to avenge a father's death. But the openly recognized conflicts are scarcely handled any more definitively. While Hamlet vacillates between his philosophical doubt that it is ethical to take human life and this traditional obligation for revenge, chance resolves the issue. In a similar way, while he remains unable to make up his mind whether suicide is justified, life worth while, the immortality of his soul a certainty, chance brings him the death he cannot will either for himself or another. All these conflicts are mechanically resolved in an orgy of killings; so that even though in a few of them justice may appear to have triumphed, it has been by accident; but in most of them we do not know whether justice has been done or not. We have only the psychological finality of death in place of the philosophical finality of the triumph of justice. This avalanche of deaths has buried the one generalization the era accepted as absolute; the price of dissension within the royal family has been the foreign conquest of one's country. The play leaves the observer with a psychological exhaustion that does not entirely conceal his philosophical confusion. Obviously there are too many conflicts of values here, and however episodically gratifying, they are not resolved in any

way that is clear enough to be socially useful. Nor is Hamlet the only play of Shakespeare's exhibiting this confusion of meanings. *Richard the Second* similarly hesitates between the desirability of removing a particular king and the fear of popularizing such a removal into a general rule. In fact, the exceptions to this ambiguity in Shakespeare are those plays in which the recognition of legitimate political authority is unquestioned. These are the plays, like *Macbeth*, the most "classical" of them all, in which, because Shakespeare is most conservative politically, he can secure a more swift and coherent plot. But *Lear*, though it argues the question in the wisdom of Lear's madness, also achieves the closed structure with its thesis, repeated for emphasis in a subplot, that everybody suffers when a strong legitimate hand fails to control the state, the family, and by inference those business corporations into which the old guilds are being transformed.

In the multitude of these conflicts is to be found the brilliance of the Elizabethan drama. But I do not think it has often enough been recognized that they are only reflections of unresolved conflicts in society itself. The superb closed system of medieval life has broken down. While it has lasted, it has reinforced the philosophical absolute of Greek thought with the fool-proof doctrine of divine inspiration from the Biblical tradition. The notion of tragic conflict itself became an impiety. A society so certain of its authority, so systematic in its view of the universe, could only have made Satan its tragic hero and would have felt it blasphemy to do so. Conflict could no longer be solved by human action, but only through the grace of God. Absorbed in the positive rules and the heavenly hope of the Christian faith, the medieval society felt neither the need nor the desire to emphasize the tragic exception. But now the tragic exception floods in everywhere and nobody can be sure it is not instead a novelty to which old rules, and the old conception of rules, no longer apply. Empiricism is in the air. The old is on the defensive everywhere except in politics where absolutism saves itself temporarily by championing the new. Elizabethan society, after the Armada, was a temporary uneasy equilibrium, held together by the personality of the queen, the flush of military victory, the prosperity of the country. But the class antagonisms beneath are denoted by the fact that the

monarch, though absolute, had to get permission of the bourgeoisie in order to enter her city of London. Feudal values are in process of being superseded by bourgeois ones. Underneath its specious adherence to classical forms and its real rejection of medieval, Elizabethan tragedy is expressing its interest in exceptions to the rule more than it is celebrating in true classical fashion the rule itself.

The form of the drama, then, is actually changing under pressure of the new attitude and authority of the middle class. But it is more important to note that it never reaches a clarity comparable to the Greek. Under the growing opposition of the middle class, neo-classicism, which represented the last puff of feudal inspiration, grabbed for the classic closed structure and strangled it in the dying grasp of dogmatism. Thus, at least, I would describe the rise of the doctrine of the three unities in France and the stilted formalism of Racine. In England, where the pressure of the new class was more imperative, even theoretical dogmatism could hardly be achieved by neo-classicism. It defeats itself in the grotesque extravagance of Rymer or is forced against its will into an experimental attitude in the criticism of Dryden. As far as the writing of dramas is concerned, the English neo-classicist had become incapable either of writing tragedies or of enjoying their production. The tragedies of Dryden are the exception that proves the rule. Generally speaking, tragedy in any effective sense of the word, became impossible; and comedy, losing the mechanical form it had inherited from Roman models, became tragi-comedy. Tragi-comedy may be difficult to define as esthetic structure, but its psychological origins are clear. It results from the impact of middle class seriousness upon aristocratic frivolity. Incapable of taking its ideals seriously, the English aristocracy could only satirize itself. It dared not satirize the middle class save through the compromising medium of its own relationship to the squirearchy; and when it sought a little consolation for its impotence in an impulse to ribaldry, it found a Jeremy Collier at the door. In fact the virus of middle class morality was already infecting its own thin blood. Congreve might satirize the innocence of virginity, but at the end of *Love for Love* he melts into adoration of it.

The transition continues, and only a new type of confusion emerges. But it would be fairer to look for an example within the ranks of the middle class. Often the difference, putting style aside, is only one of emphasis, as in Defoe where the writer is officially on the side of morality but is tempted to approach it through the detailed delineation of its opposite. Milton, of course, is the proper example. And if one demurs that he transcends the limitations of class, of course, he does in certain respects. *Lycidas*, for instance, is thoroughly classical. It is not only a closed structure; the closed structure is positively framed for us when the shepherd by his example tells us to quit moping and turn to our own affairs; we have been purged of pity and fear, and should now know enough to go about our business. But I cannot help feeling that this emphasis upon the frame was a response to the contemporary temptation to tragi-comedy, a wilful rejection of its mixture of values by the most conscious discrimination of them. Where death was concerned, it was easy for Milton to be a purist. But in *Paradise Lost*, his most mature work, he too reproduces the deficiency of his age, and if we do not recognize that this is so, it is only that we share the deficiency still. In a way we do recognize it whenever we discuss whether Satan or God is the hero. What we fail to see is that this discussion is irrelevant. Of course God is the official hero, but Adam is the actual one, and if we talk with admiration of many of Satan's qualities, it is that they are the virtues of Adam. Not the characteristics Adam displays while idling in the voluptuousness of the Garden, but those we see beginning to show when he pulls himself together after the Fall, proud that the chance has come to show his manhood, to protect his wife, to exercise greater free will than choosing this rather than that banana. Adam is humanly sad to renounce the easy life of the leisure class, but he leaves the Garden of Eden like a man with a job to do and a scarcely concealed impatience to be about it. He has become the bourgeois ideal. And I wonder a little that those critics who seem shocked that Milton portrays so human a Satan with such understanding have not been more shocked that he dared what Dante never ventured, to portray God himself. In Satan an unconscious urge to rewrite the Prometheus legend is barely restrained by



conscious deference to the traditional subject. But in the garrulous conversation of God with his son the Promethean spirit leads the poet into an actual parody of the naive anthropomorphism of primitive peoples, and he not only pictures God as a man but as virtually the sort of man, aged and retired from business, to which Newton and Deism were about to reduce him. These are the real meanings of *Paradise Lost*. The loss of Eden was a great opportunity for man, but officially it was a tragedy. Hence the special confusion of its tragi-comedy. Satan has been the paradoxical instrument to release the energies of Adam, and we are at once (though obliquely) plunged into the later Romantic confusions between moral good and evil.

When therefore, the middle class values which *Paradise Lost* represents find they cannot express themselves through the closed form of classical tragedy, they frankly create the new form of tragi-comedy. That is, they are no longer capable of producing tragedies; tragedy henceforth, as a form, degenerates into the tragi-comedy of melodrama; it cannot take itself seriously. But the new type fails to get clarified, fails to develop beyond the innuendoes of *Paradise Lost*. I think the explanation once more lies within the nature of the social situation itself. For the new society never explicitly denies the existence of eternal laws, but it does more and more (if we leave professional philosophers behind) take its attention off from them. The theology of *Paradise Lost*, which is bad enough, deliquesces into *Night Thoughts* and *Pleasures of the Imagination*. Men are becoming absorbed in the practice of the new method of Adam which that other Adam Smith is to define so sharply for us as the method of competition. Any significant universal view of things dessicates into a neo-classical survival in the eighteenth century or spins the threadbare fabric of a Paley. Burke alone, attempts to stem the tide by submitting the laws of competition to the higher law of social equilibrium, but he was only temporarily successful, since at the same time new theories of progress and evolution were approaching the problem from another angle. Under such circumstances even tragi-comedy tends to disappear. Esthetic expression tends to lose sight of form altogether, and holds desperately to "the



forms" or experiments with new forms, or as in Sterne ridicules the attempt.

The individualism of the Romantic movement marks a crisis in these tendencies. But for our purpose here, its importance is that it brings into the open the notion of progress. Now altogether and for the first time we find emerging a literature which disregards all deference to the static law of the Greeks. Whether the method of competition is an eternal one or no, the attention is now centered on the new conception of history as change in an ever better direction. For the first time we get a frankly "open" literary structure. Contrast the novel of Fielding, in which marriage closes like death upon Tom Jones, with the novel of Dickens which he can scarcely end he is so conscious of the passage of time and the production of children. The tendency is more striking still in the family series of Balzac and Dumas. Shelley's poetry is, however, the best example of open structure, and his *Adonais* should be contrasted with both *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*. Unlike Milton, Shelley will not leave his dead friend at peace in heaven. His poet hero has become a Prometheus unbound of ideas provocative of human progress. When he dies, he continues his development and in some obscure but certain way from his eternal abode still influences the hearts of men to their improvement. Shelley discarded his materialism, but he did not discard his ideal of progress; he made it go on in heaven in an almost Hegelian way.

For the open form progress is an endless process, in contrast to those examples of the closed form which seem to admit progress within limits, without transmutation of species, and hence "closed" and become static once the limit is reached. A medieval pilgrimage of human life is an example of such a closed form, because accumulation of moral worth or worthlessness stops when heaven or hell has been reached. The essential characteristic of the open form is that the entire work is presented as only a segment of a continuing universal process. The development that has been going on during its story continues by inference along the general lines that have been set, after the words have actually stopped. It is the opposite to a process of purgation and leaves the reader not tranquil but disturbed or on the edge to act. It

tends to remove the conception of tragedy entirely from literary expression in this best of all possible worlds.

But we must not press in too detailed a definition. For the new concept remained of shifting content once you got beyond the general idea. The failure to understand its essential meanings, whatever they might be, we posit from the inability of Romantic literature to present dramatic action without falling into melodrama or sentimentality. The new form could not yet express itself through conflict and action, in what the critic would call dramatic structure. Its expression remained subjective, ideational, verbose, mere simple narration. The loose structure of the novel suited it; or the short lyric in which intricacy of meter disguised the lack of essential form.

It is more germane to our purpose to examine a later development of this open form. As the flush of Romanticism passed, a literature came into existence in which the idea of progress persists despite an actual pessimism as far as actual present facts and moods are concerned. Shelley, once more, is the pioneer. The *Ode to the West Wind* ends with an abrupt turn from pessimism and impotence in the present to blind faith that spring must follow winter. Zola's *Germinal* is a later instance from the field of fiction. The bulk of the novel consists of candid pessimistic observation. Though written from what we should now call a labor point of view, it shows no ray of hope. A coal strike is put down; the workers return to work at lower wages; they have learned no lesson of organization from the strike; the union leaders are hopelessly theoretical, more in touch with the middle class and their own political ambitions than with the working class; while on the other side, the organization of owners is in effective alliance with the police powers of the government. No whit of the action of the novel justifies optimism; yet it has a happy ending of blind faith in the future dominance of the working class. Here an obviously closed structure is followed by an open conclusion which has no structural relation to it. Almost the same structure is found much later in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. A hopeless picture of European decadence, followed by an expression of faith that out of the World War good must come through the automatic functioning of the natural law of the oscillation of the

dominance of good and evil. Mann, to be sure, furnishes a perverse connection in that this serious final philosophy has been previously expounded with the vacillating irony of doubt by one of his characters.

Little more has been accomplished in all these years than that the latent contradiction in *Paradise Lost* has become glaringly clear. But the contradiction in Milton's work had been in the philosophy itself, not in the action; the open form of its conclusion had an evident relationship to the previous action. Now the contradiction is openly between the action and the philosophy; a now consistently optimistic philosophy is tacked on to consistently depressing facts. Here is no satisfactory solution of the Miltonian dilemma.

The dominant arts of our own period, painting, music, sculpture, have resolved the contradiction by abandoning the social scene and restoring the closed form in a new guise of purely abstract geometrical design. According to this conception "good" sculpture anywhere at any time, whether its theme is a madonna or a pigmy African chieftain, affords the same pleasure of balanced masses, of rhythmic symmetries of line or curve. Fiction has found greater obstacles in the way of escaping social meaning. But the torturous structures of the subjective novel, of symbolism in poetry, of the whole cult of unintelligibility, show that our writers are making the desperate attempt.

A portion of the literature descriptive of the working class alone has taken an opposite course. It has not sought to escape but to solve the Miltonic dilemma, the dilemma of Shelley and Zola. It succeeded in cutting through it when it found factual evidence for a new relationship between the closed and the open forms which sacrifices neither but brings them both for the first time into a new and an apparently adequate relationship. Thus at long last, it has evolved an intelligible definition of tragi-comedy.

A total of pessimistic facts, whether in Sophocles or in Zola, inevitably demands the closed structure; for under such circumstances a strike, such as Zola presented, not only fails, but it fails for a reason similar to that for Oedipus' failure; the cumulation of mistakes becomes proof of the violation of an eternal law concerning the social position of the working class. The "tragic flaw"

now becomes the inability of the working class to recognize its humble position in the social structure which leads it into the mistake of trying to better itself by resort to the unruly method of the strike. Such a novel might theoretically be written. But it is an important historical fact that none, taking this position with the frankness of a Sophocles, has to my knowledge appeared. Certain novels have been published in which this conclusion would be clear enough if the events had been presented by themselves but is only a neglected inference since they have been overlaid with so much apparent sympathy or hypocritical disguise. The two that I have read happen to be both about the Spanish Civil War, Joseph Peyre's *REHEARSAL IN ORVIETO* and Ernest Hemingway's *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*. They should be read to gain insight into the difficulties that baffle the attainment of the closed style today.

But strikes do fail, as any particular venture of man may. If a writer nevertheless demands an optimistic conclusion to his novel which is something more than a detachable postscript at the end, he must throw his conclusion into some sort of valid relationship to those very same events which are leading to the failure of the strike. In those events must lie the seeds both of the immediate failure and of the presumption of ultimate or later success. By a dialectic relationship amongst the details of the narration, the two opposite truths must be thrown into harmony: the truth that social progress exists as a general rule and the truth that the reality of particular failure indubitably exists also. The first truth is the new truth which science and Romanticism have brought into our consciousness; the second is the candor of classical observation disassociated from its particular philosophical explanation. The first without the second produces the open structure of fantasy, unrelated to fact and history, like so much Romantic literature which has been justly criticized. But the classic recognition of the tragic event requires a more profound, a less one-sided analysis than the classic tradition has afforded it. The classic error lay in denuding the event of material, essential to its validity but irrelevant to the tragic conclusion which the dramatist sought to present with the impressiveness of oversimplification. A banal platitude of Romanticism itself here helps

us out; for every cloud does have its silver lining; the unalloyed misfortune no more exists than the unqualified pleasure, the success without a flaw. Every event, like the human personalities that participate in it, has its fluctuating antagonistic elements that make possible its feeding into either a pattern of success or failure. It feels the tug of other events upon it; these will determine the side of it that comes uppermost immediately; but its other and contradictory aspects continue to exist, continue to await those other events, more congenial to them that may activate it perhaps in an opposite direction. When the novelist's detail is seen in this fashion, his belief in progress demands also belief in the possibility of failure, belief in the existence of degenerative elements in society.

The closed structure had a comfortable simplicity; a particular bad conflicts with an eternal good. But the Romantic open structure was an uncomfortable confusion. It had no method of reconciling progress and poverty, joy and sorrow or any of the other well known contradictions. Tragi-comedy recognized the confusion but could not give it order until the emergence of these new novels I am referring to. In them the hero may die, which is certainly a closed structure as far as he is concerned, but the cause may plausibly live on in an open structure ending because the effect of his exertions remains as a social force. Or the opposite may be true; the cause may for the moment be done for, but the hero lives on to revive it. This new form, to be sure, demands special definition of the hero as only the more successful creation of the same social forces that are at work in society generally. He is so well-integrated that he can in varying degrees mould the social forces that have created him; so that his death leaves a process functioning though in a changed fashion. The final crisis in such a case is only the last of a series throughout the book, and each crisis is a redistribution of the forces of men and events which has both its optimistic and its pessimistic sides. Progress under this new conception of conflict in action is no longer a vague concept of mechanical, and therefore unconscious, accumulation of good, but it is a process of human conflict from which any respite is only a temporary equilibrium. Every novel, thus composed, becomes avowedly an episode in the larger move-

ment of history, and even though exclusively about the present, is more truly an historical novel than the thousands so named which have understood the past as only a different back-drop to the same old story of human nature. This new form, while recognizing as clearly as any Greek that tragedy exists, can at one and the same time bring a form the Greeks could never attain to the definition of comedy by throwing it frankly into this dialectic relationship to the tragic fact.

Since the handling of detail is vital to the success of this new conception and a handling of detail opposite to that of "the slice of life" school, any synopsis of a novel that illustrates it is bound to sound unfairly mechanical, like a glib summary of a living situation. But I take Steinbeck's *GRAPES OF WRATH* to be a superb instance of this new method. The main story of the Joads gives the following graph. Traditional American optimism until the family reaches California; then a plunge into pessimism, relieved by the experience of the possibility of a better life in the government camp; but after leaving it, a drifting into a confusion of vague hope and cruel experience. Meanwhile another graph is needed for Casey and Tom Joad. The preacher is pessimistic at the start when the family is cheerful; he becomes the confident leader of the farm hands in California when the Joads have lost hope. Though he is killed and Tom is forced to flee because he has killed a man in Casey's defense, Tom has been influenced by Casey's example and the experience of the government camp. In his farewell conversation with his mother, he sets the tone, philosophically and psychologically, that hovers over the action of the rest of the book. The consequence is that the hope of the Joads at the end of the book is inarticulate and unfocused rather than vague; for Tom has aroused the conviction, in startling contrast to the desperation of their present circumstances, that he is somewhere still learning, and that he or, if he is killed, one of the men he has trained, the whole mass of those who have similarly learned, of those who now understand the valid meaning of democracy, will ultimately come to the rescue. I believe that this novel is the most subtle and adequate illustration of this new form of successful tragi-comedy.

We are not here interested in the nature of the social viewpoint



of these novels beyond the factual statement that the new form appears congenial only to writers sympathetic to democracy and the common man. Our point is, rather, that we have at length seen emerge in modern times that extremely rare phenomenon, a new esthetic form, which appears to have resolved a confusion in the definition of tragi-comedy that has existed since the Renaissance.

*by Minna Gellert*

### MODERN POET

That is a tear, petrified in falling;  
He is mourning his long absence from himself.  
Folded side by side—he and his hapless wound—  
Blown by the wind away from each others calling,  
His own arms carry him from where he swooned.

Paint him kindly as he crawls from battle,  
Passion decomposed is chained to his ankles,  
And the taste of his blood is the only taste he knows;  
He toys with hope as a baby with his rattle,  
Like an infant he turns and discovers his toes,

But not with glee, for now we find him weeping,  
The bone of his thought speared through with desolation,  
Remembering the years in which he thrust  
Himself forward into his own heart's keeping,  
And then somehow, somewhere, broke the trust.



by Vincent Wall

## MAXWELL ANDERSON: THE LAST ANARCHIST

NOW that the echoes of the present European war are being clearly heard in this country, it is obvious that another period of national culture is at an end, just as 1914 marked the end of a different era. Hence it is not too early, perhaps, to criticize the work of the foremost dramatist of the decade who sometimes expressed so exactly the temper of the times, yet who was often at complete variance with it.

Maxwell Anderson dominated the American theater of the thirties as Eugene O'Neill dominated that of the twenties. O'Neill's pessimism, his odd combination of realism and mysticism made him the most representative dramatist of the post-war period. To an almost equal extent Maxwell Anderson expressed the period of financial readjustment and chaos that followed.

In another sense, however, Maxwell Anderson's independence set him apart from his time. Not only as a literary craftsman—since he alone was writing poetic and romantic tragedies—but in other respects, his was an alien voice. In an age of increasing collectivism this voice could be heard praising individualism, independence, and the frontier spirit. In an age of increasing governmentalism he could still maintain that the best government was that which governed least. As the last champion of what almost amounts to a laissez-faire and rugged individualism, he is an isolated figure, almost an anachronism. And since anarchy has few apologists even among the radicals, Anderson is a lonely and puzzling figure—at least until the nature of his anarchy is examined. As a rebel he has been a part of many an insurrection, yet always in a quiet, academic manner without personal aggrandizement. He seldom attends the openings of his own plays and seldom answers or discusses criticism of them, although he is a fine critic himself and has contributed several penetrating essays on

the drama. Yet during the last decade in which he has produced his mature drama he has maintained a remarkably consistent point of view other than the mere blanket condemnation of war, fascism, and industrial tyranny which satisfied so many writers; and as a craftsman he has written in several different mediums ranging from prose realism to poetic tragedy.

Thus on two scores he has aroused the interest and ire of his critics and peers. First, he has dared to write plays which were romantic and tragic and in verse when a good many of his critics felt that contemporary life could only be expressed realistically and in prose, and when some of them thought that tragedy could not be written at all. This, however, is less important than a second dispute which arose concerning the ideas which lay behind his plays and repeat themselves in them. This criticism has been mostly from the left wing critics who have found Mr. Anderson of slight stature according to the Marxist critical yardstick. Their charge is that his brand of anarchism makes him a defeatist—that he has achieved his popularity in the theater by escaping into the romantic past.

The fact that the critical wolves have been in full cry whenever an Anderson play has been produced may have been responsible for his remarks on a playwright's qualifications on the occasion of receiving the Critic's Award for HIGH TOR:

But of all these qualifications, necessary as they may seem, only one is central . . . his priesthood, his belief in what he is doing, his belief in the theater and its destiny, are the essentials to significance. . . . If a civilization has any meaning at all, that meaning will be found concentrated in its arts, and the theater is our national art.

This ringing affirmation of his faith in his art in the face of adverse criticism is both noble and heartening, for he not only takes it seriously but applied himself seriously to the preparation for his service in the temple. This included apprenticeship in several professions before he became a dramatist. Before that he had been a journalist and editor but what is perhaps more important he had also been a poet and teacher.

Long before he turned to the composition of his first play at the age of thirty-four he had been experimenting with verse pat-

terns. Together with Padraic Colum and Genevieve Taggard he had aided in founding a magazine of poetry, *THE MEASURE*, and in 1925 he collected his own verse in a volume, *YOU WHO HAVE DREAMS*.

Of no less importance, however, was his appointment to the faculties of several Middle West and Western colleges. In the classroom and library he no doubt picked up the historical details which has given authority to his historical tragedies, and more particularly to his interpretation of the American scene. And it is particularly important to remember when watching the development of the art forms used, revised, and discarded that Anderson brought to the theater not only the journalist's and editor's awareness of contemporary events, and the poet's depth of feeling and sense of language but also the scholar's knowledge of the heritage of the theater from Aeschylus to Ibsen.

## I

It was hardly by accident, however, that Anderson's career as a teacher ended when he was dismissed from Whittier College for his pacifism. He told his class one day after reading a poem, "A Prayer Before Battle", that, "if the enemy had offered the same argument for victory, the Lord of heaven might have been placed in an embarrassing predicament." Similarly he lost his job on the *San Francisco BULLETIN*, it is said, for declaring that "it was hardly reasonable to suppose that Germany could pay the entire Allied War Debt." During the tumultuous 'teens such statements were radical and dangerous.

With such a history it is small wonder that his first successful play was a collaboration with Lawrence Stallings, *WHAT PRICE GLORY?* Here war is treated realistically, so much so that the authors admit grudgingly that "There's something about this profession of arms, some kind of damned religion connected with it you can't shake." In the light of later and more searching plays and novels on the shattering effect the war had on the lives of those engaged in it, this is still "romantic", as is the ending when Quirt, ill and tired after boozing, calls to his captain as he prepares to go back to the front: "Hey, Flagg, wait for baby!" Yet it is at the same time more real than if either of them had deliv-

ered himself of an editorial on war as a capitalistic enterprise which sacrifices the lives of citizens for profit. It is a realistic appreciation of the romantic appeal which war has always had.

On the technical side, *WHAT PRICE GLORY?* is as fine a job of play making as the theater had seen since Eugene O'Neill's early sea plays. It was, in fact, so notable that the authors tried twice to collaborate on historical plays in prose but without success. Anderson, apparently, knew what he wanted to do but had not as yet discovered quite the pattern. Still, even in *FIRST FLIGHT*, their next play, there is something of the formula of several later plays, notably *WINTERSET* and *MARY OF SCOTLAND*, namely a form in which the first two acts are racy, filled with adventure and action, while the last is a lyrical scene of deep emotional appeal. Also in this play we meet that salty, voluble, alcoholic Major Singlefoot who reappears with his whiskey jug as Sol Fitzgerald in *BOTH YOUR HOUSES*, little changed indeed after a century of debauchery.

Other than this, little importance can be attached to these collaborations, nor indeed to *SATURDAY'S CHILDREN*, his first independent play to succeed. It is his most appealing play in many respects, and may hold the stage long after the more pretentious costume pieces are forgotten. But, like *THE STAR WAGON*, it has little connection with those plays which reveal the growth and development of the dramatist who is to write *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* and *WINTERSET*, and who is to dominate the theater of the 'thirties.

Of greater importance is his next play, *GODS OF THE LIGHTNING*, which was a collaboration with Harold Hickerson. This play is a moving narrative of the trial, conviction, and execution of two I. W. W. agitators for a crime which they did not commit. Coming as it did, however, little over a year after the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, it found scant favor with metropolitan audiences. Although praised by some it added little to the author's reputation as a dramatist, and when Burns Mantle published *AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS OF TODAY* in 1929 he failed to include Anderson in the honor group, although he found him "promising". It is true that these years had been years of incubation and preparation but only one independent play, *SATURDAY'S CHILD-*

REN, had been a real success. However, Anderson had ended his apprenticeship to the drama and the next decade is full of brilliant achievement.

## II

In fact Anderson's initial effort in the 'thirties indicated clearly that he was more than a "promising" playwright. He had previously written much poetry, he had collaborated on historical plays and he had pondered deeply the nature of tragedy. As a result, *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN*, when submitted to the Theater Guild in 1930 was considered worthy of the talent of its brightest stars.

In 1929 Joseph Wood Krutch had published *THE MODERN TEMPER*, a study of that loss of faith in the gods and in man which had once in more happy, vigorous, and confident ages resulted in the writing of great tragedy. In a chapter entitled "The Tragic Fallacy" in this volume, Mr. Krutch analyzed this. "Tragedy arises, then," he asserted, "when, as in Periclean Greece or Elizabethan England, a people fully aware of the calamities of life is nevertheless serenely confident of the greatness of man, whose mighty passions and supreme fortitude are revealed when one of those calamities overtakes him." The "tragic fallacy", however, is that today, owing to some enfeeblement of the human spirit we are no longer confident of our own or anyone else's ability to rise "serenely confident", and face a calamity which may result in destruction but which so ennobles the observers of the action that they achieve a "tragic reconciliation to life". Having lost all belief in the gods as well as arbitrary rights and wrongs, modern authors can only write tragedies which are an accusation against the world rather than a justification of it.

In 1929 Maxwell Anderson had written just such a play. The heroine of his prose tragedy, *Gypsy*, is a neurotic creature, dishonest and emotionally unstable, a victim of heredity and environment. Mr. Anderson has never published this play, and apparently felt that this—his only independent prose tragedy—was a failure, artistically as well as commercially.

In 1929, therefore, almost in refutation to Mr. Krutch's theory of the tragic fallacy, Schoolmaster Anderson turned his back on

studies of psychological misfits and malcontents and turned to a golden age. ELIZABETH THE QUEEN was to be a tragedy—if not a modern tragedy, at least a tragedy by a modern author; and in it he peopled his stage with those very men and women whose passing Mr. Krutch had so lamented: Elizabeth, Cecil, Essex, Raleigh and even Richard Burbage who appears *in propria persona* acting Falstaff by royal command.

It is hard to tell whether or not the Theater Guild's subscription audience achieved that night of November third quite the tragic exaltation that the Elizabethans felt when Lear bent over a dead Cordelia or Othello found too late that his wife was innocent of adultery. But for his part Mr. Anderson acquitted himself handsomely. The protagonists were heroic: a queen, capricious, fierce tempered, proud and lonely, and a young and an ambitious courtier. Here was sufficient grandeur of theme for most audiences; here a man and woman were working out their own inevitable destruction; yet it was one which must leave the audience with the satisfaction that it was not only inevitable but that the characters were somehow ennobled by it. There is recognition of this in their last speeches to one another:

ESSEX. It's better for me as it is  
Than that I should live and batten my fame and fortune  
On the woman I love. I've thought of it all. It's better  
To die young and unblemished than to live long and rule,  
And rule not well. . . .

ELIZABETH. Oh, then I'm old, I'm old!  
I could be young with you, but now I'm old.  
I know how now it will be without you. The sun  
Will be empty and circle round an empty earth . . .  
And I'll be queen of emptiness and death . . .

Lord Essex is destroyed by his tragic flaw, ambition, just as surely as was Macbeth; he has realized that he would have ruled Elizabeth's kingdom rashly and heedlessly, that she was cautious and wise in intrigue and diplomacy. And he comforts himself with the same stoic wisdom with which A. E. Housman comforts the athlete dying young:

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay.

What Mr. Anderson has done in this play is obvious, and it is

interesting to contrast it with Mr. Krutch's observations on the present state of tragedy. He would agree with Krutch that one of the difficulties of writing modern tragedy is our loss of faith in the gods and the nobility of kings; he would disagree in that he does have faith in man, for Anderson once wrote in an early poem:

Now that the gods are gone,  
And the kings, the gods' shadows, are gone,  
Man is alone on the earth,  
Thrust out with the suns, alone.

And although man himself has a bitter destiny, Anderson at least has a belief that he is capable of facing it with dignity.

It is true that in *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* he dodged the issue to a certain extent. Granting, perhaps, that we are unable to believe in the grandeur and nobility of our contemporaries, we are more likely to believe in a hero and heroine of "heroic" times. And he further evades the issue by what many believe his romantic attitude towards these characters. Whatever the "real" Elizabeth and Essex might have been like is naturally hard to say; but Anderson has been at some pains to give us the best of them both. This is one of the elements which marks him as a romantic dramatist, and the critic's only concern is whether he adequately establishes the characters for what he wishes them to be. In this he is successful, for we find him turning to advantage the lessons in dramaturgy which he had learned in earlier plays. The power of love to change and to raise men and women to unexpected heights we shall see him using again and again; just as we see him again and again speculating on the nature of government and the effect of individuals exercising it; and, as in *WINTERSET*, there is the same tragic catharsis which comforts the audience witnessing the untimely end of the hero, since like *Cyrano de Bergerac* he carried forth his plume unblemished and unbent.

That these elements in the play which distinguish it as tragedy were introduced and developed quite consciously is proved by the fact that Anderson later produced an essay of his own on the subject. "The Essence of Tragedy" was written when Anderson was asked by the Modern Language Association of America to prepare a paper for the American drama section. The founda-



tion for the theory of tragedy there expounded is one which applies to some, if not all, of his own plays. It is based on the Greek conception of the "identification scene", which is that point in the drama wherein the protagonist discovers something in his environment or in his own soul of which he was not hitherto aware. This should occasion the crisis, and should dictate the end of the play. Its effect on the hero is such that his direction in the play is altered.

An identification scene of this sort is present, Anderson believes, in all the plays we choose to remember. It is present, in some form or other, in most of Anderson's tragedies. In *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN*, for instance, it is the scene at the end of the second act wherein Elizabeth, after she has promised to share her kingdom with Essex and after he has dismissed his followers, orders his arrest. "I have ruled England a long time, my Essex," she says, "And I have found that he who would rule must be quite friendless, without mercy, without love."

It is true, then, that the tragic flaw which in this case is an essential in the character of each of the protagonists is that which dictates the end of the tragedy. Ambition, pride of place, prevents them from enjoying their love, since it causes them to doubt that love. Actually they do not realize this completely until the third act. The crisis, as in most Anderson plays, is too dramatic and full of action to admit much introspection. Only in the lull that follows, in the lyrical third act, do we find it given statement.

As a corollary to this theory of the identification scene, Anderson feels that the hero, after achieving this new realization of his tragic destiny, must learn to suffer. He cannot change, but he can bear his grief with dignity and spirit. He must try to correct this tragic flaw, and the correction may or may not result in his destruction. In *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* both protagonists are destroyed since Essex realizes that if he lives it will only be to wrest the kingdom from the woman he loves. Both, however, have risen to heights: Elizabeth, the queen, has offered Essex her kingdom; and Essex has preferred the scaffold rather than take it from her. Here is what Anderson calls "an excellence dimly apprehended", here is evinced man's belief in his own destiny. Or, perhaps, in Anderson's case it is a belief in the poet's dream of man's destiny.

This, then, is the author's conception of what tragedy should be; in another essay he has defended the poesy which he chose as the medium for the expression of these conceptions. Here again the defense is *ex post facto*, the latter essay being the introduction to the play *WINTERSET*. But once again it is only a codification of what the author had long felt about dramatic verse.

### III

Before the production of *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* it would have been possible to have counted on one hand those plays in verse written the last hundred years which had been really successful. Several playwrights of the Abbey Theater had experimented with the poetic form; several other famous poets had tried it. But success such as that achieved by Rostand's *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* was rare; Ibsen is chiefly remembered for his masterpieces of prose realism rather than for his sagas of Viking heroes. Nevertheless, there has always been an undercurrent of feeling that the drama of naturalism wherein the prose of life is exhibited unadorned by passages of great emotional tension did not alone satisfy. As T. S. Eliot, who has himself written one fine poetic drama, has observed, the theater is the ideal medium for poetry:

... for the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for the auditors of greater sensitivity and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually.

Anderson, who was a poet before he was a dramatist, wrote his first play in poetry because, as he once told Barrett Clark, "all the great plays I can remember were in verse." In his essay, "A Prelude to Poetry in the Theater", he further defends the medium. Prose is the language of information, poetry the language of emotion. The best prose on the stage, he feels, is inferior to the best poetry. Hence, the plays of journalistic comment which fill our theater are inferior to those plays which reach occasionally into the upper air of poetic tragedy. For Anderson, as for Bernard Shaw, the stage is a cathedral of the spirit. Just now it is filled with plays whose purpose is to comment upon our social, eco-

nostic, and political life. But in Anderson there has always been a belief that an age of faith in things unseen will follow an age of reason and that eventually the cathedral will again house the mysteries out of which our drama grew. This strain of mysticism which runs through Anderson's work, only occasionally coming to the surface but always a part of its foundation, is probably responsible for his experiments in verse.

Now there is no doubt that poetry does heighten the emotion of a scene, that the imagery and cadence of verse fires the imagination of players and audience. And there is no doubt that Anderson's dramatic verse has at times done just this. However, in order to determine how relatively successful he has been, it is necessary to inquire into the requirements and nature of dramatic verse, since there has been little understanding of really competent criticism of it during the past few years, largely because there has been so little written. Most of the criticism that Anderson's verse is stiff and prosy is from poets themselves who have not written a line of dramatic verse; or from critics who claim that poetry on the stage is a medium and idiom that does not express or interpret our society and times.

IN *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* and *MARY OF SCOTLAND* Anderson was taking legends familiar to theater-goers and decorating them with verse, much as the Elizabethans took scenes of far away and long ago for their tragedies. For this he was labelled an historical and romantic playwright—two terms which he dislikes but which he will find difficult in denying. With these backgrounds he was relatively successful. Certainly these plays, and *NIGHT OVER TAOS* as well, contain some fine passages. There is fairly judicious mingling of prose and poetry, for instance, in *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN*: the bustle and confusion of the council scene of the third act is entirely in prose. The dialogue turns to poetry only when Elizabeth and Essex face one another alone. In *MARY OF SCOTLAND* and *NIGHT OVER TAOS* his style seems to be more disciplined, at times almost becoming sparse and barren. However, John Mason Brown felt that Anderson achieved in the former play, "not only the best historical drama that has ever been written by an American, but a script which brings the full-flooding beauty

of the English language to a theatre in which its beauties are but seldom heard."

Certainly there is beauty here, not only in a lyric moment when Mary bends over the dead Rizzio murmuring, "He wanted to go to Italy", but also in the unforgettable scene when the two queens face one another in Carlisle Castle. However, these plays of far away and long ago aroused nothing like the storm of criticism as that which greeted a play produced a few years later.

In *WINTERSET* which was produced by Guthrie McClintic in 1935 Anderson had written a play which was attended by as much criticism as was Victor Hugo's *ERNANI*. The reason, of course, was that here was not only a tragedy in verse but an American tragedy. Here were gangsters, hoodlums, and a judge from the bench all speaking in iambics. As the author points out in his preface to the play, not even Shakespeare had ever attempted that. His great tragedies, while interpreting Elizabethan life, nevertheless all deal with foreign princes and gentlemen at foreign courts or with England's own historical past. Never were Elizabethan audiences asked to believe that their own contemporaries spoke in blank verse; and the scenes in Shakespeare which most vividly picture Elizabethan manners are nearly always in prose.

In *WINTERSET*, however, Anderson had chosen a theme hitherto treated only in terms of naturalism. Moreover, it was a theme which he himself had so treated a few years before when he and Harold Hickerson had protested the injustice of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial. In the intervening years Anderson had brooded over the fate of those men about whom he had once written so eloquently. He now approached the subject with the ripened judgment of the philosopher rather than with the zeal of the reformer. His speculation into the nature of social justice is now tempered and tinged with the stoicism which has colored so many of his later plays.

*WINTERSET* is in the nature of a sequel to *GODS OF THE LIGHTNING*, inasmuch as the hero of the former drama is the son of an anarchist condemned to death for his political convictions much as were the protagonists of the latter play. The simple words of Vanzetti at the time of his sentence, "If it had not been for this thing, I might have lived out my life talking on street corners

to scorning men. . . Now we are not a failure", rang in Anderson's ears many years after they were spoken. In *WINTERSET* the son of this man appears searching for evidence to prove his father's innocence of the crime for which he is convicted, and the first two acts of the play are concerned with his struggle to wrest this truth from one of the surviving witnesses.

*GODS OF THE LIGHTNING* is a bitter, searching melodrama but it is primarily a play of journalistic comment on the injustice of the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti. Since *WINTERSET* is a play written by a poet who is interested primarily in the larger meanings of social justice and revenge, he accomplishes his purpose just as Shakespeare once did; in other words, he takes the melodramatic details of a simple revenge play and makes the hero of it a poet and a philosopher. There is little doubt that this was quite intentional, since Anderson had earlier realized the value of relying on English classic tragedy as a model in trying to bring back poetry to the theater. Now he felt that an audience which could accept Hamlet could accept Mio Romagna. The latter hero even has some of the former's tendency to speculation and conjecture although he is on the whole a much more incisive and vigorous personality. In fact, the tragic flaw of indecision does not appear until this Hamlet meets his Ophelia and they dance together under the huge spans of a Manhattan bridge to the strains of a hurdy gurdy. This changes the course of the play since his Ophelia is the sister of the man whose evidence could clear the name of his father. At the end of the tightly written second act he is betrayed by his Ophelia, and—as in so many Anderson plays—there ensues a lyrical third act in which these star-crossed lovers become more like Romeo and Juliet. This, indeed, is a tragedy of fate rather than of a doom sealed by the overgrowth of any complexion. In fact, the third act in some respects introduces a new theme. For Mio, thwarted in his search for justice, turns rather to a consideration of forgiveness and mercy, and these he finds before both lovers are felled by a gangster's bullets.

This, then, is the play which so engaged the attention of the critics that comment concerning it filled not only the columns of the morning papers, but those of the entire season. The import-

ance of the theme, the beauty of the production, the novelty of a modern play in verse—all claimed their serious attention. Few could fail to commend it on some score. However, as to the quality of the verse and as to the appropriateness of allowing gangsters and hoodlums to speak in blank verse, opinion was by no means unanimous.

Obviously, any character in any play has a right to speak in verse. In the most naturalistic drama in the world there is some editing of the speech, for men and women are rarely so articulate and so given to revealing their emotions as characters must be in a play. However, there must be an illusion of reality, and whether gangsters should speak blank verse is another matter. Joseph Wood Krutch pointed out in *THE NATION* that it was as fitting for them to do so as it was for a Venetian general to deliver his order in iambic pentameter or a fourteen-year-old Italian girl to extemporize immortal verse. This, of course, is true, yet Shakespeare never attempted to make the robbers at Gadshill speak in verse, although it must be admitted that the bitter, clipped idiom of the doomed gangster is highly effective.

In fact, Anderson in the highly successful character of Trock proved that blank verse could have a vigor and freedom and need not impede the action of the play. Moreover, during scenes of action the speech frequently turns to prose. In the radical's denunciation of the law there is an amusing parody of Union Square jargon:

SECOND GIRL. Please, officer, we want to dance...

POLICEMAN. Sorry. Can't help you.

RADICAL. And there you see it, the perfect example of capitalist oppression! In a land where music should be free as air and the arts should be encouraged, a uniformed minion of the rich, a guardian myrmidon of the Park Avenue pleasure hunters, steps in and puts a limit on the innocent enjoyments of the poor!

Similarly, when Judge Gaunt's mind is wandering and, Ophelia-like, he begins to chant scraps of vulgar ballads, his speech is prose. This, of course, is again in the best Elizabethan tradition.

At times, however, there are speeches which might well be in prose which are in verse which then becomes bombast and rhetoric. This has given rise to the criticism that the play was too full

of cosmic platitudes, that the author was too preoccupied with figures of wind and rain and the stars. It should be remembered perhaps that these figures have always been the figures of poetry; and that Shakespeare himself was preoccupied with the figure of the poor painted player who so frequently struts and frets his stage. And at times the verse rises to real intensity and feeling, as when Mio discovers Miriamne's loyalty to her brother has betrayed him:

Mio. The bright, ironical gods!

What fun they must have in heaven! When a man prays  
hard for any gift, they give it, and then one more  
to boot that makes it useless

(To MIRIAMNE)

You might have picked  
some other stranger to dance with . . . Or chosen  
some other evening to sit outside in the rain.  
But no, it had to be this; all my life long  
I've wanted only one thing, to say to the world  
and prove: the man you killed was clean and true  
and full of love as the twelve-year-old that stood  
and taught in the temple. I can say that now  
and give my proofs—and now you stick a girl's face  
between me and the rites I've sworn the dead  
shall have of me! You ask too much!

There is power and authority here and the voice of the poet rings clear and true. As to those other moments of bombast, it is perhaps well to remember that few Elizabethan plays are so marred. As Mary Colum (herself a poet) has pointed out, the very nature of dramatic verse demands it. Which perhaps reduces the problem to the fact that few poets and critics are aware of what constitutes real dramatic verse. And Mr. Anderson, who is a competent critic and knows as much about it as any other, will only say at the conclusion of his essay on the subject that whether or not he has solved the problem in *WINTEREST* is of little moment. . . "it must be solved if we are to have a great theater in America."

#### IV

Besides the wonder aroused by an American playwright's attempt to write a tragedy in verse, Anderson's plays of the 'thirties



were a challenge in another sense. These were the years during which a new school of criticism was flourishing. The songs of the 'thirties were all songs of social significance, and if Anderson stood alone in writing poetic tragedy he was at one with his contemporaries in wanting to comment on contemporary problems. What he had to say about those problems, however, was at considerable variance with what his critics both to right and left were saying. And once again the discussion centered about *WINTERSET*. This was to be a drama wherein editor, poet, and scholar were to collaborate with the playwright. Heretofore, the poet and playwright had produced such a play as *MARY OF SCOTLAND* or editor and playwright had produced tracts for the times.

In *WINTERSET* Anderson's comment on the nature of class justice in America caused as much criticism as did his medium of expression. This time, oddly enough, the attacks were mostly from the left—from those same leftists who had cheered the earlier *GODS OF THE LIGHTNING*. This play had been completely ignored by conservative critics, although ironically enough when it was produced at the Anderson Festival at the Pasadena Playhouse during the summer of 1939 it was vigorously applauded by the *haut bourgeoisie* who all but threw their orchids at the feet of the players. In fact, this production as well as *WINTERSET* is an illustration of the ironies of introducing propaganda in art. The only real criticism of either play came from the Marxists who have always resented Anderson's conclusion that although a great social injustice was done when the State of Massachusetts condemned Sacco and Vanzetti, no power on heaven or earth could right it.

Miss Eleanor Flexner in *AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS 1918-1938*, a series of essays appropriately subtitled "The Theater Retreats from Reality", finds the seed for Anderson's defeatism in *GODS OF THE LIGHTNING*. However, it is full blown in *WINTERSET*, for Mio, after wringing the confession of guilt from the murderers, does not go forth triumphant to attack the gilded walls of capitalism. The same steadfastness of purpose which had brought him three thousand miles to seek out these murderers should have made him proclaim their infamy, not only in order to vindicate his father but to forge new weapons for the class struggle. In-

stead of this, however, Mio is thwarted by the vision of a girl's face, and there follows a lyrical third act in which he wills to forget his purpose.

Mio. Miriamne, if you love me  
teach me a treason to what I am, and have been  
till I learn to live like a man. I think I'm waking  
from a long trauma of hate and fear and death....  
...But teach me to live  
and forget to hate!

The final irony, of course, is that death awaits both lovers after Mio has discovered this secret of forgiveness. Perhaps here the author is guilty of failure to construct a completely inevitable conclusion. But that is no doubt the author's purpose and is no graver a defect than the delayed letter which brings Romeo to grief. Anderson believed that these young vagabonds had small chance of happiness; the world was not their friend or the world's law. And to die young and unblemished, as so many of Anderson's young idealists die—Mio, Essex, and Rudolph of Hapsburgh—this is a gallant and beautiful thing. This is what brings about that feeling of "tragic exaltation" which is so rarely felt in the theater today. Esdras, the father of Miriamne, reads the epitaph of the two lovers which is almost a complete statement of Anderson's stoicism:

...this is the glory of earthborn men and women  
not to cringe, never to yield, but standing  
take defeat implacable and defiant....

...On this star,  
in this hard star-adventure, knowing not  
what the fires mean to right and left, nor whether  
a meaning was intended or presumed,  
man can stand up, and look out blind, and say:  
in all these turning lights I find no clue  
only a masterless night, and in my blood  
no certain answer, yet is my mind my own,  
yet is my heart a cry towards something dim  
in distance, which is higher than I am  
and makes me emperor of the endless dark  
even in seeking.

It is evident that Mr. Anderson's conclusion concerning man's

fate in this hard star adventure is not too cheery. When accused by Max Eastman of being a defeatist, however, Mr. Anderson felt called upon to reply in *STAGE*. Here he claims that his hope for the human race is not that it will achieve perfection or apparently even improvement in magnanimity and mentality in the near future but only over a long period of time. Meanwhile civilizations may come and go and with them different disciplines and moralities. Of these it is futile to conjecture; only the poet may dream of them: "For what the poets are always asking for, visioning and projecting, is man as he must and will be, man a step above and beyond his present, man as he may be glimpsed on some horizon of dream, a little nearer what he himself wishes to become." To hold to this, Anderson believes, requires more courage than to cherish illusions that man with all his present limitations could save himself by revolutions—political or scientific.

Meanwhile, however, there is only that belief that there is in man—at least in most of Mr. Anderson's heroes—the courage of despair, a gallant conviction that they at least will meet their inevitable defeat with head bloody but unbowed. This is never better illustrated than in Mr. Anderson's latest play, *KEY LARGO*, which is in many respects a successor to *WINTERSET*, since it is a poetic tragedy dealing with contemporary events. It might almost be said to be an answer in dramatic form to the charge that his heroes have surrendered their lives and their missions too easily. In the prologue to this play a band of eight recruits, mostly Americans, are defending a machine gun nest in Loyalist Spain. Their leader, King McCloud has discovered that they have been betrayed by the Loyalists who are giving up the cause of Spanish democracy and are about to ask Franco for terms. Meanwhile the foreign recruits are being sacrificed in order to cover the retreat of the other Loyalist troops. For McCloud, Spanish democracy has been a symbol of something far greater. It was an ideal made tangible, something to believe in, a standard to defend. It was to give meaning to an otherwise meaningless life. Yet now, the cause of Spanish democracy is being abandoned and this ideal has been betrayed: Franco, McCloud believes, will win in Spain. The English, the French will see to that:

... But if he didn't, Stalin would win in Spain  
and it's one blood purge or the other,  
but never justice  
only the rat-men ratting at each other  
in a kind of rat despair.

These are almost the words of Queen Elizabeth when she discovers that Cecil has outwitted the Earl of Essex. The snake-mind, she concludes, is best; the free of soul, the valiant go down; "The rats inherit the earth." In this play, however, Anderson gives fuller voice to his conviction that there is in men some dim, indestructible belief that whatever the conduct of the rat-men may be, a lost cause is better than no cause at all. Victor d'Alcala, another of the Loyalist recruits, prefers to remain and face death defending the retreat of the other troops than to desert as McCloud counsels:

... if I die  
then I'll know that men will never give in;  
then I'll know there's something in the race  
of men, because even I had it, that hates injustice  
more than it wants to live. ...

And that means the Hitlers  
and the Mussolinis always lose in the end—  
force loses in the long run, and the spirit wins,  
whatever spirit is.

The rest of the play follows the WINTERSET pattern. Just as in WINTERSET the larger problem of the nature of social justice was complicated by a lurid gangster melodrama, in KEY LARGO another gangster and his mob offer the hero a chance to test these two attitudes towards living. Whether deserting and failing the Loyalist cause was "cowardly" or "sensible"; whether he should have lost his life in order to save it—this is the issue. As in the former play the hero spends the third act talking the matter over with a heroine and her wise old father. Once again the patriarch delivers the judgment, and the hero is convinced that it is necessary to believe that man is advancing millenium by millenium, from civilization to civilization, that the noblest action is to die in order to prove this to himself. Fortunately the rat-men offer him a second opportunity to vindicate himself. He dies in order to save

two derelict Seminole Indians whom a corrupt Florida sheriff wishes to arrest for a murder they did not commit.

Anderson has used the formula of the gangster melodrama often enough to be fairly familiar with it. In the romantic fantasy *HIGH TOR*, it is used as comedy; and in *WINTERSET* and *KEY LARGO* to provide sufficient action and suspense to relieve the philosophic conjecture which accompanies that action. However, how effective and honorable a device melodrama may be is of no prime importance. The fact is important, however, that Anderson in *KEY LARGO* absolved himself of the charge of defeatism, yet at the same time proved himself to be an uncompromising idealist.

Thus he has at least tried to rationalize his position, although few leftist critics would admit that he has answered them successfully. The brand of stoicism which he defends in *KEY LARGO* is as little palatable to them as was the utter despair reflected when the oriental heroine of *WINGLESS VICTORY* turns on her Puritan persecutors and flays them for their hypocrisy and cruelty. In Anderson's social philosophy there is scarcely more hope for immediate amelioration of the social problems besetting our age, than there is in Bernard Shaw's belief that some day there will be a race of Methuselahs wise enough to solve those problems. For comfort for those suffering from poverty in a land of plenty he can offer only a belief in the poet's dream.

This is not enough for the Marxists. They will neither forgive him for this stoicism or for his lack of faith that any collective action will solve our difficulties. Only twice in the Anderson theater do we find any great affirmation of faith of this kind. The first instance of this is when Alan McClean the crusading hero of *BOTH YOUR HOUSES* accuses of corruption the politicians in Washington who have just passed a ruinously extravagant appropriations bill which generously lines their pockets: "You think you're good and secure in this charlatan's sanctuary you've built for yourself," he tells them. "You think the sacred and senseless legend poured into the people of this country from childhood will protect you. It won't..." Eventually their constituents will turn them out of office. Just who will replace them, however, since Anderson believes that the rat-men inherit the earth, is not certain.

The second instance is in the tremendously moving speech of George Washington in *VALLEY FORGE* when he surveys the cold and hungry men he is commanding in this last desperate stand against tyranny and oppression. They are, he says, "an uncouth clan, unread, harsh-spoken" but they are followers of a dream of liberty and freedom. There will come a time when men will be able to bear no burdens save of their own choosing, to worship as they please, to walk upright—independent and masterless. This is destined to be, even if they themselves fail. Yet it will not be without travail. At the end of the play, as they are burying their dead, Washington grimly reflects that

this liberty will look easy by and by  
when nobody dies to get it.

However, these two great affirmations, this faith in America, is hardly a belief in any kind of radical action. In none of Anderson's plays is there a rallying cry for the proletariat to unite and throw off their chains. This is for two reasons. First, Anderson is too much of an individualist; and second, he is too convinced that government is and always has been exploitation. He believes in the class struggle and he even feels that the capitalist system is worse than the Marxists claim that it is: it is so bad that it can't be changed. Secondly, he believes that radical action will never be effective since the radicals are always too busy fighting among themselves ever to present a comprehensive strategy that could outwit entrenched greed.

On this score he has disappointed the leftists sadly. For instance, in *GODS OF THE LIGHTNING* Anderson failed according to their standards because of the character of Suvorin, who believes all struggle against entrenched capitalism is futile. This disillusioned anarchist delivers a vicious attack on radicals of all stripe and color because of their failure to unite, for the continual bickerings within the party:

... How many years have I sat listening to fools' talk? Five years—ten years. And what have I learned from you?... that you know nothing—that you learn nothing! Uplifters you are, dreamers, reformers, thinking to make over the earth. I know you all and you are fools—the earth is old. You will not make it over. Man is old. You will not make him

over. You are anarchists, maybe, some of you social pap. The world is old and it is owned by men who are hard. Do you think that you can win against them, by a strike? Let us change the government, you say. Bah! They own this government, they will buy any government you have. I tell you there is no government—only brigands in power who fight always for more power!

This is indication of how little Suvorin believes in that perfectionism which is the essential core of socialism. And one of the characters in *KEY LARGO* offers much the same sentiment to his comrades. One of them has remarked that they actually have little knowledge of what they're fighting for.

We thought we did before we started. We said, no matter what they do with their freedom, they have a right to keep it. But suppose the first thing they do with their freedom to put on chains? We believe in the rights of minorities, is don't we? Well, there are fifty-seven minorities in Loyalist Spain... Anarchists, Communists, Leftists, Rightists, Leftist-Rightists, Rightist-Leftists, Socialists, Leftist-Socialists, Rightist-Socialists, Anti-clericals, Clerical-Communists, Loyalist soldiers, police, crazy people... But if they won and it came to a vote, and one party was in power, would it make hash of the other fifty-six varieties!

The ultimate reason, however, for the Marxist's criticism of Anderson's stoicism and his lack of faith in collective action, is that fundamentally he wished to write tragedies, they wished him to write propaganda. *That* his integrity could not permit. Since he could not accept the Marxian dialectics he could hardly make plays of the themes of the class struggle as outlined by Marx and interpreted by Lenin. Or rather when he did as in *WINTERSET* take the theme of class justice he gave it his own interpretation, and shows that the judge who condemns the anarchists to death is himself a victim of class justice.

Judge Gaunt in this play is not made the villain of the play. Anderson has reserved for that position the gangster Trock. The Judge he portrays as the victim of the system he represents just as is the man whom he sentenced to die. In the play, the Judge is an outcast wandering the streets, the victim of amnesia, trying to find justification for what he has done. He defends his position



when Mio confronts him with the evidence which proves his father was innocent:

...there are things a judge must not believe even though they should head and fester underneath and press in on his brain. Justice once rendered in a clear burst of anger, righteously, upon a common laborer, confessed an anarchist, the verdict found and the precise machinery of the law invoked to find him guilty—think what furor would rock the state if the court then flatly said all this was lies....

A vendor of fish is not protected as a man might be who kept a market. I own I've sometimes wished that was not so, but it is. The man you defend was unfortunate—and his misfortune bore almost as heavily on me—I'm broken—broken across. You're much too young to know how bitter it is when a worn connection chars and you can't remember—can't remember.

Miss Flexner, of course, has no sympathy for this note of pathos. She reprimands Anderson for not vigorously prosecuting a judge who could admit as clearly as he does the nature of class justice. Other critics—Grenville Vernon in *THE COMMONWEAL* for example—found Gaunt the only truly tragic figure in the play. Certainly the intensity of the torment of the conscience-stricken old man made him an unforgettable, if not a tragic figure, and Anderson's pity and understanding of both the judge and the condemned anarchist as victims of class justice recommends him as a tolerant, and perhaps very shrewd, critic of the radical movements of the third decade.

This impartiality, this passionate sense of justice which is revealed in so many of his plays is one of Anderson's noblest qualities. Consequently, perhaps, it has inspired some of his best poetry. He is magnificent in wrath, and when he rises in anger to denounce tyranny and sham he is extremely effective. If he has criticized radical ideology, he has certainly not spared conservative opinion.

In this he is not alone among dramatists, for since Shaw established the form of the drama of discussion, almost every item in the curriculum of the social sciences has been discussed. But

Anderson is alone in that he has made the discussion an integral part of his drama. His favorite hero has been the rebel reformer; and he has set against him to represent the conservative position no man of straw but a worthy opponent who as often as not is the victor. Hence, there is almost always a real dramatic issue. Besides the two plays based on the Sacco-Vanzetti legend, he has discussed in *KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY* the meaning of democracy; in *HIGH TOR* the possibilities of anarchism; in *BOTH YOUR HOUSES* he has attacked corruption in Congress; in *NIGHT OVER TAOS* he has dramatized the passing of the Spanish feudal order in the far west; and in *THE MASQUE OF KINGS* has discussed the nature of kingship.

In fact, he has been so preoccupied with these problems that he has been the object of one of Wolcott Gibbs' pungent satires in *THE NEW YORKER* entitled, "Eva's Deathbed Revisited". The author's note tells us that it is the account of a nightmare experienced by a man attending *KEY LARGO*, and then attempting to read himself to sleep by rereading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This parody illustrates the contention of many of his critics that his verse is empty and pretentious, that he is something of the pedant, certainly too much of the political scientist.

At times, it is true, it does intrude on the action. For instance, in *NIGHT OVER TAOS* the forward movement of the play is halted by Montoya, the feudal lord of Taos, who insists on giving advice to his son who is urging him to eat after the battle:

MONTOKA. Not when I'm about to fight, Felipe. Have the sons of Montoya never felt it . . . a fever in the lover so devouring that food is impure? No, no . . . you're young. There's an ancient belief that wisdom comes with age, and the twenties are the time of passion. It's for that reason they choose old men as judges . . . men who will have outworn the lusts of the flesh and blood and be willing to rule impartially over the sins of youth. But all this is a fallacy. For wisdom and justice we must depend on the young; for madness in devotion to a cause, for all madness, you must go among their elders . . . It's a thought for your stage should you ever govern, Felipe. Make no old men judges . . . Make the old men soldiers. Old men are

swift, violent, crafty, lecherous, unscrupulous in winning, relentless in defeat, putting their cause before affections . . . Young men are much too tender, much too true. . . .

This advice Anderson thought so well considered that he repeated it in *WINTERSET*. But certainly in this previous play (which has other structural defects as well) it slows up the action to a standstill.

In other plays it is much more natural and frequently gives solidity to his drama, for he seldom indulges in such extraneous conjecture as the above, but makes the issue a concrete thing. As to his opinions themselves they are fairly clear-cut and they repeat themselves with sufficient regularity to be fairly obvious. He is first of all the anarchist, the arch-individualist who is actually of the opinion that the best government is the government which governs least. Hence, the best government probably is a democracy, since in its fumbling, stumbling inefficient way it brings about a maximum of civil liberty and personal freedom; hence, he condemns a dictatorship which although it may be more efficient nevertheless always ends by destroying personal freedom. For Anderson feels strongly that power (and wealth which is power) always in the end corrupts the individual and leads to tyranny. In *VALLEY FORGE* when Washington is meeting with his officers to determine whether they shall continue their insurrection, one of their number complains bitterly about the inefficiency of Congress and its lack of support of the army so pitifully unprepared for the rigors of winter:

Do you know what I think of governments, by and large, I mean in general? They're run by pimps, who get kicked out of hot-houses for picking the customers' pockets. This one we've got—we made it, set it up, picked the best men we could find and put them in—and their brains began to rot before the year was out. It rots a man's brains to be in power, and he turns pimp and picks pockets; the scavengers! At least, when you have a king you can chop his head off.

Anderson would no doubt agree with Harold Laski who once maintained that after years of study of political science the only truth to which he could subscribe was that "power always corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

This is aptly illustrated again in *THE MASQUE OF KINGS*. This is Anderson's solution of the mystery which shrouded the double death of Rudolph, heir to the Hapsburg throne, and his mistress, Countess Mary Vetsera, at the Mayerling shooting lodge one January night in 1889. According to Anderson, this is the tragedy of a really liberal prince who wanted to lift the iron heel of the Hapsburgs from the necks of his subjects. In this he is naturally opposed by that wily and cynical tyrant, Franz Joseph, his father. Rudolph allies himself with the disgruntled Count Hoyos who commands the Vienna garrison troops, and together with other liberals surprises Franz Joseph in his study.

Rudolph tells his father that the absolutism of the Hapsburgs is over. He himself will take the motto of the medieval kings—"nothing for myself".

... Let me drink plain water and eat  
plain food, and turn what mind I have to an instrument  
of justice, clean of greed, despising politics.

But here Franz Joseph enters the opening wedge of his counter attack. He points out that Rudolph's first steps must be tyrannous and bloody; that is the nature of revolutions. Franz Joseph offers to supply him with a list of seven hundred names of men who must be liquidated. And he adds that there needs must be military rule as well as complete censorship of the press. He subtly points out that all governments are class governments, that Rudolph must rise to power as he did himself. And Rudolph admits that "A government's business is to guard the trough for those whose feet are in it." As soon as he touched Franz Joseph's power he felt the blight.

... then virtue  
went out of me to him; I was not the same,  
and any man who sits here in his place  
will be as he was, as I am.

He turns to the desk wherein his father has advised him there is a diary of one of the traitors, and finds it to belong to his own mistress, Mary Vetsera. Thus, like *Mio Romagna* in *WINTEREST*, he is turned aside from his purpose, not only because of the disillusion of finding that he would have to take tyrannous measures

to establish himself but because of an unfortunate upset in the course of true love.

Whether or not this is bad dramaturgy is hardly to the point here, since what Anderson is essentially trying to do is dramatize the destroying power of power. It is a pitch that defiles all who touch it. It brings about the destruction of the Earl of Essex, of Mary of Scotland, and Rudolph of Hapsburg. In this instance Anderson has gone so far as to show how even a liberal monarch cannot rule without being corrupted. Hence, apparently, it is better to have no government at all, or at least as little as possible, since then and then only can man's personal freedom and dignity be assured.

For this reason Anderson hates the totalitarian states even more than the corrupt monarchies which they replaced. State socialism with the dictatorship which goes with it leads to the servile state wherein men surrender their personal liberty and dignity for a mean dependence, for a social security which ill repays them. Anderson feared and hated this servile state with as violent a fear and hatred as did G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the early years of the century when state socialism was being so vigorously defended by Shaw and Wells.

The fact that in an age when nearly all liberal thought involves a certain amount of collectivism Anderson can still believe so intensely in individualism has made his exact position somewhat equivocal. The fact that he could rise to such a vigorous defense of Sacco and Vanzetti places him at once in the "liberal" camp; in fact, his defense of anarchy itself indicates a very radical stripe in his make-up. Yet here the radicals themselves will hardly own him since he has repudiated all kinds of governmentalism. During the past few years, when misery has been so widespread and when many youths—like Mio in *WINTERSET*—have been unable to find a place in society, many have come to the conclusion that it is the responsibility of the government to intervene in some way. Similarly the need of protection of the citizen as consumer against monopoly involves a tremendous amount of governmentalism. Yet, that way bureaucracy lies, and Anderson fears it.

In fact, he fears it so much that he wouldn't even trust the government to take care of the great army of the unemployed and

the unemployables. This is probably the gravest flaw in Andersonian political economy. No one has greater sympathy for such outcasts: witness the hobo in *WINTERSET* who sleeps under the pipes in the Esdras tenement. Yet he has never in any of his plays or prefaces suggested how they are to be provided for, save by private charity; and he is realist enough to know that that is hardly a satisfactory solution.

For Anderson, in spite of his great compassion for human suffering doesn't look for much amelioration of that suffering. All he offers is a kind of personal salvation through individual initiative. Take for instance, the Indians in *KEY LARGO*. They are being hunted from key to key by a corrupt sheriff who ignores the activities of the gamblers on the waterfront. However, they have a fine defiance of a white man's laws and a white man's justice and prefer a miserable existence in the everglades to governmental charity on a reservation.

This fear of governmentalism which he feels is dangerously near to state socialism has led Anderson to the conclusion that democracy is best. Here civil liberties are protected at least, and—inefficient though it may be—the rats have less chance to inherit the earth. He has dramatised this to best advantage in a musical comedy, *KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY*. In this play Anderson has allowed his genial satire to play over the field of politics in general. To little old New York which is being ruled in a very haphazard way by the city fathers comes Pieter Stuyvesant who claims that government is always “a group of men organized to sell protection to the inhabitants of a limited area at monopolistic prices.” However, Stuyvesant realizes also that as dictator, the populace must keep certain illusions about him; hence, he engages Tienhoven, father of the heroine, to negotiate the sale of weapons to the Indians. He also glorifies him in song as “the one indispensable man”—indispensable to any government.

... In every government  
Whatever its intent  
There's one obscure official with a manner innocent  
His job invisible  
Is purchasing good will  
With wads of public money taken from the public till;  
He's the one indispensable man.



In setting up this very pleasant little dictatorship with much urbanity and charm, Stuyvesant finds it necessary, however, to hang the hero, Brom Broeck, who is a musical comedy version of Van Dorn of *HIGH TOR*. Brom claims that since coming from Holland, and since living in the wilderness for a winter on wild turkey and Indian corn he has developed a strange malady: this is a peculiar inability to take orders. In other words, he has discovered independence and self respect. That, Brom and Washington Irving who occasionally appears on the scene, decide is what distinguishes an American:

Yes, it's just that he hates and he damns all the features  
Of any mortal man set above his fellow creatures,  
... He does his own living, he does his own dying  
Does his loving, does his hating, does his multiplying  
Without the supervision of a governmental plan—  
And that's an American!

For this Brom is about to have his neck stretched but saves himself by an appeal to the city fathers whose government Stuyvesant replaced. Their government, Brom tells them, was clumsy and corrupt as all governments are, but it had the immense advantage of being "incompetent in villainy and clumsy in corruption". Stuyvesant, on the other hand, is efficiently vicious and corrupt. And the former is infinitely to be preferred. "Let's keep the government small and funny," he says, "and maybe it will give us less discipline and more entertainment."

This idea appeals to the city fathers, especially to one Roosevelt who is supposed to be some dim, distant kin to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in as much as "ven he gets an idea it sticks". They refuse to hang Brom and Washington Irving, who once again appearing as a *deus ex machina*, conveniently placates Stuyvesant with the promise that he who is about to become the city's saint shouldn't blemish his reputation with such a bloody deed.

There is excellent fun in this operetta, for which Kurt Weil produced a score almost as lively as Mr. Anderson's book. The lyrics have a Gilbertian wit and irony that is delightful. *KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY* at least proved Anderson's versatility. He can handle light verse and farcical comedy to advantage. It may not be *The Beggar's Opera* of our day but at least it has topical



wit and informing intelligence that is first rate satire. It illustrates the fact that perhaps Anderson's claim to a permanent place in the ranks of our first flight dramatists is that he has searched unfailingly for new forms. He has tried his hand at melodrama, realism, poetic tragedy, poetic fantasy, comedy, farce, and comedy drama. He has had the courage to revive dramatic forms which have not been used successfully since the closing of theaters in 1642. How much the scholar has betrayed the playwright; how much the political scientist has betrayed the artist—this is for another generation to decide.

## VI

As a document—and all Anderson plays have something of the document in them—*KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY* proves that as an anarchist he is pretty conservative; just as *KEY LARGO* proved that as an idealist he was a bit on the pessimistic side. These paradoxes are the key to Anderson, and their resolution is a secret to an understanding of his plays.

There is much wisdom in what Anderson has been saying in the past decade of dramatic composition. However, there are several fallacies implicit. First, it is very well to admit Anderson's claim that an American is one who can't take orders—for we are a nation of law-breakers. This is all right as long as the government is kept "small and funny". Yet, the government of the United States today, however funny it may be to some, isn't small. And as in the past few months we have seen most of the "small and funny" European governments steam-rolled by the infernal efficiency of fascism, Anderson's observation seems dangerously flippant. Certainly it is not an intelligent suggestion, since our complex national and international structure demands another and larger view of our governmental problems. Another dangerous irrelevancy is that Anderson's belief in individualism is such that he seems to approve of nineteenth century laissez-faire economics. In *BOTH YOUR HOUSES* Sol Fitzgerald, a lusty and salty old man of Falstavian proportions, gives a brief lesson in history. He defends the congressional raid which has just been made on the national treasury by telling Alan McClean, the young idealist

who is trying to reform Congress, that brigands built up this country.

They stole billions and gutted whole states and empires, but they dug our oil-wells, built our railroads, built up everything we've got, and invented prosperity as they went along. Let 'em go back to work! We can't have an honest government, so let 'em steal plenty and get us started again.

Now McClean does confront him with the threat that "there are a hundred million people who are disgusted enough to turn from you to something else." But what that is he doesn't say. And it can't be denied, Anderson has always had a reluctant but very real admiration for such lusty old tyrants as Pablo Montoya, Pieter Stuyvesant, and Franz Joseph of Austria. While they were brutal and perhaps corrupt they were at least men.

And if he would hardly agree to turning the country over to the robber barons again, he does look with nostalgia to the lost horizons of the nineteenth century. In *HIGH TOR* his hero who owns a mountain on the west shore of the Hudson River finally decides to sell it to shyster real estate agents. The dying Indian in the play who is the symbol of a way of life opposed to the commercialism which is pressing hard upon them advises Van to seek wilder land and higher mountains. "You'll find them," says the Indian with supreme confidence. He bids Van dig his grave for him and to bury him as his ancestors were buried; and he leaves our hero looking forward to the time when the railroad bridges along the Hudson will be as picturesque as Roman aqueducts. No one can blame Anderson for disapproving of the less dignified aspects of contemporary life; but he is a little willful in insisting that our frontiers have not disappeared: we are living in a very different economic era and must face that fact.

There is a good deal of shrewd common sense in much of what he says, however. We can be grateful for his warnings against dictators and demagogues. Such are his convictions that we can expect to be a vigorous champion of civil liberties in those trying times which may lie ahead of us. As the last anarchist, we may be sure that Anderson himself would retire to *High Tor*—he himself owns the property—and would defend it with his life against any encroachment on his personal freedom. However, Ander-

son's theater of the 'thirties was written before the European danger was so insistent. Just as much of the Marxist criticism written before the formation of the Berlin-Moscow Axis has become completely irrelevant, some of Anderson's observations seem to have been intended for a cycle of American life already far distant. Certainly the Anderson theater of the 'forties will no doubt have a different note. The current of mysticism in his plays will probably be deepened; perhaps there will be no more journalistic comment than in his most popular but least literate play, *SATURDAY'S CHILDREN*.

One thing it is certain Anderson's work will always possess, however. This is his faith in his art and in the theater as one of the liveliest of the modern arts. In fact, it is more: it is a cathedral of the spirit and the playwright must be worthy of his service. It is Anderson's greatest service rendered that in this cathedral he has restored the wonder and the enchantment which the theater once had, but which it has lost in an age of realism and journeyman comedies. Anderson made it a place where Dutch skippers could reappear on the Palisades of the Hudson, where young lovers could meet and love and die under a Manhattan bridge, where men and women could sail away in a Wellsian star wagon.

And in this coming decade we may be grateful for that bitter wisdom which is to friend us in the dark and cloudy day. The bright ironical gods who look down on the lovers in the Manhattan dead-end alley are just as pitiless as those who looked down on poor Tess and Eustacia Vye on Egdon Heath. But at least Anderson will always have faith in faith and in the poet's dream.

by Arthur H. Nethercot

## THE DRAMA OF IDEAS

IT is a strange fact that the subject of the modern drama of ideas, as an entity by itself, seems to have been virtually overlooked by our contemporary dramatic critics and historians. Such a characteristic phenomenon of our age would seem to deserve pretty extensive consideration as an important aspect of our social and cultural development, but only a very few half-hearted attempts have been made to deal with it. One can name the Rev. Ramsden Balmforth's *THE PROBLEM-PLAY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN THOUGHT AND LIFE* (1928), a well-meaning but inadequate and rather pietistic study of a dozen or two English, Norwegian, Russian, and Greek plays; John Mason Brown's incidental discussion in *THE MODERN THEATRE IN REVOLT* (1929); Anita Block's remarks in *THE CHANGING WORLD IN PLAYS AND THEATRE* (1939); Ben Blake's concise but restricted little booklet, *THE AWAKENING OF THE AMERICAN THEATER* (1936); and one or two critical bibliographies such as Francis Drury's *VIEWPOINTS IN MODERN DRAMA* (1925)—and the list is practically complete.

Yet the frequent use of the phrase "drama of ideas" and its many synonyms and near-synonyms attests the dominance, if not the predominance, of this kind of dramatic writing today. It is sometimes difficult, for instance, to distinguish between the "problem play" and the "thesis drama" or "theme drama". The problem play, however, especially as practised by Galsworthy, has been satisfied—theoretically at least—simply to present its problem or question and has disdained to offer any solution, though it may imply one or at any rate indicate where the author's sympathies lie; from this point of view Galsworthy is far from being as impartial as he has generally been called. The thesis drama, somewhat similarly, might be said to set up a thesis and defend it, more or less like a modern debater or a medieval scholar engaging in a disputa-

tion. So Ibsen did in *A Doll's House* and so Barrie did in *The Admirable Crichton*, with his proposition: "Resolved, that there will always be masters and servants, though circumstances rather than merit will often decide which is to be which." The flood of "propaganda plays" of recent years represents a step beyond the earlier forms. Like the medieval religious drama, these are written from a dogmatic and admittedly partisan point of view. They have a cause, and they set out to make converts to that cause—converts who will *act*, and not merely think. Since most of these plays have been by left-wing authors and have been influenced by Marxist ideology, they have aimed to stir up protest and revolt and have therefore deserved the epithet "agit. prop.", for plays like Clifford Odets's famous *Waiting for Lefty* and George Sklar's *Stevedore* have obviously been propaganda for "agitation". In these "proletarian plays", all stemming from Hauptmann's great naturalistic tragedy, *The Weavers*, the proletariat itself often becomes the real protagonist, as in Ernst Toller's expressionistic *Massemensch*. For many years this propaganda drama flourished among the Soviets, first being used to discredit aristocratic and bourgeois ideology, and then, when this was deemed eradicated, to glorify the tenets and institutions of the present régime.

Perhaps, however, the most thoroughgoing revolt against the school of the romantic drama and the "well-made play" has appeared in the "discussion drama", for which Shaw has been especially responsible, though he derived the idea from Ibsen—particularly from the last act of *A Doll's House*. According to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* the "discussion" in any self-respecting modern drama will take the place of the unraveling or the solution in the old-fashioned play. Thus in the discussion dramas of Shaw, Granville-Barker, and S. N. Behrman the interest is focussed chiefly on a series of arguments and speeches on vital problems and ideas, divided among the whole cast. Here is the difference between problem plays such as Galsworthy's and discussion plays such as Shaw's: Shaw states his ideas in verbal form; Galsworthy embodies his in his characters and actions, and only incidentally, as in the lawyer Frome's court speech in *Justice*, states his moral didactically.

The term "drama of ideas" is therefore a broad one. More-

over, it may itself be interpreted narrowly or loosely. Narrowly, it would imply a play written specifically to provoke thought on the part of the audience, as Ibsen wrote *Ghosts*. Loosely, it would apply to any play which provokes thought, whether its author's primary purpose was that it do so or not. Thus Shylock and his speech beginning, "Hath not a Jew eyes?" would, from the viewpoint of the modern audience alert to racial problems, provoke social thought, although it was not until the time of Edmund Kean in the early nineteenth century that any actor thought of making Shylock anything but a ludicrous, mercenary, vengeful character. Notice that the word is always "thought", and not simply "feeling" or "emotion". Basically, there must be the intellectual appeal, though the emotional is by no means absent—or the play would probably be bad, or at least ineffective. When playwrights like Shaw write such passages as the vision scene in *Man and Superman*, they do not leave them totally devoid of imaginative or emotional appeal, but when they do write in this fashion they lay themselves open to the comment of the supercilious young author who remarked that one of his chief ambitions was to dramatize a play by Bernard Shaw.

According to one of the conventional theories of art, the very phrase "drama of ideas" would be sufficient to exclude such plays at once from the realm of art. For the word "ideas" immediately suggests a didactic purpose and, according to the Art for Art's sake school, instruction and morality have no place in true art. Fortunately, however, this nineteenth century esthetic viewpoint has less and less authority today, and literature, as well as other forms of art, is allowed to have a function and a meaning. Literature itself, of course, is being regarded by too many extremist critics as simply a social phenomenon, and therefore as demanding to be studied simply as one element in the picture of the culture and civilization of a period. The socialization of education and life in general that has recently been making so many inroads against the ancient citadels shows the progress of this type of thinking, and has caused much consternation in certain circles. One frequently hears teachers of the "humanities" use as a knockdown argument in favor of their subject against both the physical and the social ("so-called") sciences the assertion that literature does

not change—that you can always count on the permanent and unalterable values of Shakespeare, and Homer, and Goethe, and Dante—while the truths of the physics and psychology and economics of today are errors and absurd delusions as judged by tomorrow. There is no doubt that the medieval theories of medicine and the nineteenth century theories of *laissez-faire* have been completely discredited today; but how about the heroic dramas of John Dryden, the classical tragedies of Voltaire, and the well-made plays of Scribe? So literary values change as well as social and scientific ones, and literature may be allowed to teach, even if it must sometimes socialize itself somewhat to do so.

Horace in his *Ars Poetica* wrote: "A poet should instruct, or entertain, or both"—and of course, until very modern times, a dramatist was also called a poet, and considered himself one. So Horace in his discussion of the art of poetry devoted considerable attention to the didactic function of the drama, in offering patterns of good behavior and in warning against bad. Plato, on the other hand, in the famous tenth book of the *Republic*, wished to banish all artists—especially poets and playwrights—from his ideal state. His reason was that the artist is merely an imitator of life, and as such is obligated to set down character as it exists, with all its weaknesses and faults. Since he believed that man can learn properly from good examples only, and is misled and softened by bad, he would allow no artists to create in his commonwealth. Though an artist may know what is good, he does not always present it. Moreover, what he creates is only a shadow of reality; and it is therefore better to live a good life as a tangible example to others, and to teach as a philosopher, than to imitate reality in art. But Joseph Wood Krutch, in *THE NATION* for March 30, 1937, has rightly pointed out that "the poet is actually the original source of many moral ideas, not merely the transmitter of them", and that we get our ideas of right and wrong "quite as often from works of the imagination as from ethical treatises". Consequently, "the poet has as much as the philosopher to do with the establishment of the *mores*, and if absolutes do exist, then there seems . . . no reason to assume that the imagination of the poet does not reach them as often as the logic of the dialectician." Ramsden Balmforth, in his chapter "Dramatic Art in Its Rela-



tion to Ethics", quotes Shelley, Galsworthy, Granville-Barker, and Shaw to the same purpose insofar as the dramatist is concerned. "The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of drama, is the teaching the human heart . . . the knowledge of itself." "Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral." "Dramatic art is the working out—not of the self-realization of the individual, but of society itself." "I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective means of propagandism in the world, excepting only the example of personal conduct, and I waive even this exception in favour of the art of the stage."

The obvious conclusion from the foregoing paragraph is that the conception of the "drama of ideas" is not an exclusively modern discovery after all, in spite of the fact that in its modern manifestation it derives directly from Ibsen, Augier, Hauptmann, Strindberg, and others of the nineteenth century. In a sense all the greatest works of literature are infused with ideas. The ideas that have seemed important to the writers, however, have varied vastly from age to age, and it happens that the greatest change of all has come within the modern period. In general, it might be said that the shift has been from personal moral problems to the problems of society. The past has been concerned largely, though by no means entirely, with abstract or philosophical questions dealing with ethical matters affecting the relationship of man to the gods, to fate, to his own soul, or to good and evil. The present has turned its searchlight on specific aspects of the individual's contacts with his fellows, as shaped by a new world in which all the old conceptions and relationships are being attacked and remade or discarded. The old was likely to deal with spiritual values; the new most frequently concerns itself with material values, without at the same time completely abandoning the old problems.

## II

These differences may perhaps be made clearer by examining a few cases in which may be seen simultaneously both the universality and persistence of certain themes from ancient days to our own, and also the different applications and meanings of these

themes in the two ages. Some extremely interesting comparisons and contrasts can be made between several of the most famous of the Greek dramas and certain plays by such contemporary playwrights as Eugene O'Neill and Maxwell Anderson, both of whom have frequently acknowledged their debt to the Greeks.

One at once thinks of the great *Agamemnon-Choephoraes-Eumenides* trilogy by Aeschylus and of O'Neill's modern counterpart, *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Aeschylus confronts his audience with one of the most awful and most exciting of dramatic situations: a conflict of two duties, each cogent in itself and each having the weight and tradition of authority behind it. On the one side is the old doctrine of vengeance, according to which Orestes, the nearest relative, is expected to kill his father's murderers or be guilty of filial disloyalty. But one of the murderers is his own mother, and matricide is one of the most hideous and forbidden of crimes. Yet when Orestes defies this taboo and avenges his father, retribution must follow. He has done right according to one standard; wrong, according to another equally valid one. This dilemma Aeschylus ultimately resolves in the tense and closely reasoned debate of the Areopagus, which the Goddess of Wisdom, Athena herself, is forced to decide by voting for Orestes in her supreme speech preaching a new religion of understanding, love, and forgiveness. The play ends with her transforming the Erinyes, or Furies of hate and vengeance, into the Eumenides, the Kindly Ones, bringing blessings and salvation. A new spiritual dispensation has begun.

O'Neill's play, produced 2389 years later, changes the emphasis considerably in both characters and motivation. Since the sister, who in Aeschylus is not pursued by the Furies, because she has merely urged her brother to revenge, is his leading figure (as in Euripides' *Electra*), he makes little use of the last—and most interesting—part of the Aeschylean trilogy. And since the modern world has (it hopes) risen above the archaic doctrines of vengeance and retribution represented by the Furies, he has to find a new motivation and theme. The substitution of conscience for the Furies (and Aeschylus certainly did not consider the two synonymous) is not sufficient; he has to find something more modern than that. As a result he turns his play into a psychologi-

cal, or rather psychoanalytical, investigation, probing into all the complexes and psychic lesions of the hate-ridden, spiritually diseased family of the Mannons. O'Neill in spite of his Roman Catholicism is—like Philip Barry in *Hotel Universe*—symptomatic of the modern substitution of Freud for the Furies; but the Greek treatment of the situation is far more humane and interesting.

Another obvious comparison offers itself in *Desire under the Elms* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Here is another case in which the meaning of a play has changed for a later audience. In Sophocles, Oedipus blames only himself for the disasters brought on his country by his innocent incest, for in accordance with Sophocles' religious attitude (more conventional than either Aeschylus' or Euripides' would have been) the instrument of fate is to be blamed and punished rather than fate itself. Neither Oedipus nor his author reproaches the gods for the way in which he has been led into murdering his father and marrying his mother; but the modern reader reads the play as an example of how an essentially guiltless person (for the obtuseness, quick temper, and pride of Oedipus scarcely constitute guilt on his part) can be caught in a mesh of events not at all of his own making, and find himself unable to escape their doom. This sort of trap, as Walter Prichard Eaton notes in an article in *THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR* for Summer 1937, is the real link between Sophocles' and O'Neill's plays, and makes *Desire Under the Elms* a much more truly Greek play than *Mourning Becomes Electra*. On the other hand, not only has O'Neill changed his characters from kings and queens into mean, insignificant New England farm folk, but he has also transformed the religious conformity of the original into the social defiance of the lovers of the new era, who, fully cognizant of their relationship all along, go to their trial glorying in their love, although admitting that perhaps suffering and penance may be demanded of them. He has formulated a Freudian dramatization of the Oedipus complex, which is a far cry from the Greek in many ways, not the least of which is his softening of the unpleasantness of Sophocles' situation by making Abby only Eben's stepmother rather than his real mother. Sidney Howard of course presents a much "purer" illustration of this so-called complex in *The Silver Cord*.

One of the most terrible and gripping tragedies of all literature is the *Medea* of Euripides, which might well be regarded as the prime source of all the new world's dramas of miscegenation, from Boucicault's *The Octoroon*, Sheldon's *The Nigger*, and O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, to Belasco and Long's *Madame Butterfly* and Anderson's *The Wingless Victory*. Euripides and Anderson will serve excellently to bring out the ancient and modern comparison, since both deal directly with the inevitable failure of a marriage between people of diametrically different races, no matter what cause has brought them together or how hard they try to be loyal. In every case, of course, it is the woman who suffers the chief disaster. Euripides, however, is bold enough to draw both Jason and Medea with all their personal flaws; he does not obviously play for the audience's sympathies and gentle tears, as does Anderson. In his play the fault is as much that of the protagonists as it is that of society, with its contempt and rejection of any person of another color and customs. Anderson, like Hergesheimer in *JAVA HEAD*, weeps audibly over his Malay princess and charges the austerity and self-righteousness of New England with her death. Euripides does not even have his barbarian princess die; instead, she flies away, bitterly and horribly triumphant, in her dragon-chariot, taunting the man who has betrayed her. The modern writers are much softer and more sentimental, for in spite of their humanitarian attack on society's intolerance and cruelty they show at the end that their heroes and heroines have never really ceased to love.

The last of the great Greek dramatists was a comedian—Aristophanes. Though it is not quite so easy to find specific modern parallels for him as for the tragedians, he too deserves to be regarded as a dramatist of ideas. *Lysistrata*, revived not long ago in a somewhat modernized version, is after all a sort of rival of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or Louis Anspacher's *The Unchastened Woman* as a feminist play, for in it Aristophanes shows the power of women to work needed changes in society if they will only realize their strength. In fact, Aristophanes goes further than the moderns in having his women *organize*. This is the real point of the hilarious and bawdy farce of the sex strike; the use of the civil war in Greece as a background is actually incidental

to the larger purpose. The play has been wrongly called an anti-war play, since it is not pacifism which it preaches, so much as national unity for the sake of national strength against a foreign enemy. From the anti-militaristic point of view *The Trojan Women* of Euripides carries a much more powerful implication. In fact, the criticism of war as a cancerous human institution never found a real voice until after the first World War. A few passages of melancholy and lament in Shakespeare, a Senecan tragedy like *Gorboduc*, with its picture of civil strife and its interminable (though scarcely Shavian) discussions of competent and incompetent government, and minor speeches in such plays as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Jonson's *Sejanus*, Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*, and Addison's *Cato*, can scarcely be regarded as constituting an attack on war. Not until the time of Hans Chlumberg's *The Miracle at Verdun*, R. C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*, Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House*, Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead*, Sidney Howard's *Paths of Glory*, Stefan Zweig's *Jeremiah*, and R. E. Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight* and *There Shall Be No Night* can it be said that the problems of war, peace, and pacifism have been voiced with dramatic conviction and effectiveness.

In *Ecclesiazusae* (*Women in Parliament*) Aristophanes not only continued his satirical investigation of women's rights, but also made an attack on the Communistic ideas which were afloat at the time. In fact, politics—especially democracy—was a favorite topic with him. Like most satirists, however, he was a reactionary in almost everything. He was always lamenting the "good old days" and fearing the overthrow of religion by the atheists and free-thinkers (i.e., the Sophists) as well as the undermining of society by the new radical movements. He would have been thoroughly at home, therefore, in an age in which the conflict still raging among Communism, Fascism, Naziism, totalitarianism, authoritarianism, liberalism, and democracy is reflected in the mirror of the stage through Lewis and Moffitt's *It Can't Happen Here*, Shaw's *The Apple Cart* and *On the Rocks*, Stephen Spender's *Trial of a Judge*, and Archibald MacLeish's *The Fall of the City*. Aristophanes would have been an active participant in the theater's conflict between science and religion, and would probably have ranged himself alongside Moody's *The Faith*

*Healer*, Channing Pollock's *The Fool*, and Marc Connelly's *The Green Pastures* rather than with Paul Green's *The Field God* and Lewis and Kearney's *Elmer Gantry*. In *The Clouds* he attacked the new science and the new philosophy of Socrates much as Thomas Shadwell in *The Virtuoso* attacked the new Royal Society of the Restoration. To attain his objects, moreover, he introduced into all his plays long and extraneous debates and colloquies on education, morals, politics, religion, etc., much as Shaw and the modern discussion dramatists were to do. In his technique, too, he was a forerunner of one type of the modern drama of ideas, for his absolute freedom of method and his inventiveness of devices for conveying the essence or inner significance of his ideas remind one of the Expressionistic school.

### III

Such a condensed survey merely adumbrates the surprising richness of ideas in the classical Greek drama in comparison with those of more modern times. The same sort of comparison of the drama in English during the pre-Ibsen centuries with the drama of today leads to somewhat similar conclusions as to the types of ideas which preoccupied these eras. The drama of the Middle Ages was of course purely didactic in purpose. If the clergy had not realized that the instinct for miming and imitation could be harnessed and directed toward instructive ends, they would never have encouraged the development of plays in the churches and among religious bodies. Certainly they did not support the drama because it was entertainment. So, in the mystery (or Scripture) plays and in the miracle (or saints') plays, the people were not only informed in general concerning the events of Old Testament and New Testament history and of the marvels of the saints and their relics which were not recorded in the Bible itself, but were also given easy doses of education on such matters as Corpus Christi Day, a new feast introduced in honor of the Eucharist, or as the significance of the Lord's Prayer or the Creed, which were dramatized as the *Paternoster Play* and the *Creed Play*. It was very much like the Living Newspaper of the Federal Theater and Elmer Rice's *Ethiopia* or Arthur Arent's *Power* and *One Third of a Nation*, or like the use of the moving



picture in the schools today, to make education easy and palatable by visualizing it. It was a sort of propaganda drama, too, although purely one-sided, since no heretics or opponents of the church were clever or daring enough to try this method of spreading their ideas. Today there are probably almost as many anti-religious plays, or passages in plays, as there are pro-religious.

The other chief type of medieval drama, the morality play, with its purely ethical object, when exemplified by the ever-popular *Everyman*, proves to have been as positively propagandistic as anything devised by the Soviets or the Nazis, for its anonymous author not only relates the old story of Everyman's summons by Death but also dramatizes the doctrines of confession, penance by scourging, prayer, the sacrament, and extreme unction. By the early sixteenth century, moreover, the value of the drama for purely pedagogical secular purposes had been recognized. *The Nature of the Four Elements*, for instance, gives an elementary lesson in miscellaneous science and geography, very much as if a Living Newspaper playwright had set out to dramatize the periodic table of atomic weights today. On the whole, however, drama which provoked intelligent and mature thought in the Middle Ages was in a distinctly lower category than that of the Greeks, in material, breadth of subject matter, wisdom, technique, and artistry.

From the Renaissance to the middle of the nineteenth century there was such a multiplicity of "ideas" seized on by the dramatists that only the briefest resumé can be given. Many of these themes, especially in the case of Shakespeare, are capable of being reduced to abstract and simple terms, such as Honor (*Henry IV*), Ambition (*Macbeth*), Filial-Paternal Relationships (*Lear*), Revenge (*Hamlet*), Jealousy (*Othello*), Love (*Antony and Cleopatra*), etc. For this reason the idea often seems to be, so to speak, in solution, and is to be precipitated out only by close attention to the implications of the situation. The dozens of revenge plays, however, needed no such study, for their theme was too conspicuous. And the attitude of the Elizabethans towards revenge was quite contrary to that of Bernard Shaw, in such a play as *Caesar and Cleopatra*. For whereas Shaw preaches the futility and self-destructiveness of revenge, the Elizabethans,



as represented by *A Revenge for a Father*, *Antonio's Revenge*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, etc., admit that although murder breeds murder, revenge is demanded by the code, no matter what its consequence. Aeschylus was more intelligent and humane than even Shakespeare in this respect.

Questions of honor were once, of course, very ticklish ones, and the code became very complex. Dueling was one of its more serious outgrowths, which remained a real problem in society until well into the eighteenth century, after Steele had attacked it in *The Tatler* and had used it as the basis for one of the chief scenes in his sentimental comedy, *The Lying Lover*. The Elizabethan attitude is well presented in Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel*, in which young Captain Ager will not fight when he thinks the Colonel's insult to his mother is deserved, but becomes a raging lion when the insult of "coward" is put upon himself.

The most productive cause of disputes about honor was of course love, and love with its allied phases—sex, marriage, eugenics, "free love", the "fallen woman", perversions—has always furnished the dramatists of ideas with more material for controversy than any other topic. From John Heywood's sixteenth century *A Play of Love*, with its wooden debates between Lover Loved, Lover Not Loved, Loved Not Loving, and No Lover Nor Loved, to Shaw's *Getting Married* and O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* the arguments and probings for some sort of answer have gone on. Platonism invaded the court of Henrietta Maria, and produced such dramatic curiosities as young Wat Montague's *The Shepherd's Paradise*, which consisted almost entirely of a series of fine-spun disquisitions and oracular utterances about material and spiritual love, and out-Shawed Shaw and out-O'Neill'd O'Neill in taking between seven and eight hours to act—and the long-suffering actors were amateurs, being the queen and her favorite lords and ladies! Either they must have relied heavily on the prompter or else they read boldly from scrolls containing their parts. Sir William D'avenant, soon to become poet laureate, in skeptical reaction wrote his *The Platonic Lovers* and produced perhaps the sanest and cleanest treatment of physical and spiritual love in the period. Thomas Dekker, in his two-part play, *The Honest Whore*, had already drawn a very tolerant, if some-

what romantic, picture of the "fallen woman", showing the causes which led to her downfall and proving that it was possible for her to reform and live down her past—which was more than Pinero, Augier, and the other Victorian realists were willing to let her do. Dekker nevertheless was not yet ready to renounce the double standard in favor of the male single standard of Fanny Hawthorn in Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wakes*. Thus George Lillo in the eighteenth century was similarly severe with his sinisterly fascinating villainess, Millwood, but before he let her perish on the scaffold he let her deliver her eloquent and scathing indictment of the society—and hypocritical man in particular—which is responsible for her and her type. Over a century earlier Thomas Heywood, in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, had led the way to a very radical attitude toward the sinning woman who is already married, for after the aggrieved husband, Frankford, has discovered that his wife has betrayed him with the friend whom he has loved and trusted, he announces that he will not martyr or accuse her in the usual way, but instead will work so profoundly on her soul that he will kill her "even with kindness". Perhaps, since he does just what he promises, and his wife, deeply impressed by his magnanimity, soon goes into a decline and dies, Heywood should not be given too much credit for inaugurating a new era of sexual tolerance and anticipating the morality of, say, Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted*, but Frankford's behavior must have been a revelation to the average Elizabethan husband.

Even the oblique and generally prohibited aspects of sex were also treated by several daring writers before the days of Mordeant Shairp's *The Green Bay Tree*, E. Bourdet's *The Captive*, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, Michael Arlen's *The Green Hat*, and Noel Coward's *Design for Living*. Marlowe's great chronicle tragedy of *Edward II* is certainly from one point of view a study of a sex complex. Though Marlowe is as careful to avoid any actual naming of the relationship between the king and his male favorite Gaveston as was Shelley in unfolding the fearful tragedy of Count Cenci and his daughter Beatrice, there is no question of what the implications are, and a very interesting character study results. It was left to John Ford in 1627, how-

ever, to make one of the most devastating assaults on conventional morality ever put on the stage of any nation. In his tragedy *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* he not only portrays a guilty love between brother and sister which brings them to their deaths, but he also, unlike O'Neill in his halfway treatment in *Electra*, shows them untroubled by any morbid stings of conscience; in fact, they positively glory in their abnormalities. Ford's bold decadence and sensationalism have attracted much interest from students of abnormal psychology. His unorthodox, if not anti-social, treatment of sex far surpassed anything to be found even in that horrifying period of the Restoration, when Wycherley and Congreve and the rest are popularly supposed to have burrowed under the very foundations of society and the family. And yet, in their comedies, there is often a critical, intellectual quality in their attempt to analyze and get at the bottom of the relationship between the sexes. Sex antagonism as well as sex attraction is emphasized, and many passages astonish the modern reader with what he would call their modernity in anticipating many of the so-called discoveries of our own sociologists and psychologists. There is certainly more bite in the Restoration treatment of sex than in the more sentimental didacticism of the eighteenth century, which reaches the heights—or depths—of its thought in comedies like Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* and Arthur Murphy's *The Way To Keep Him*, both of which assert that the main responsibility of maintaining a happy marriage devolves on the wife, who must be tolerant, forgiving, and always varied and entertaining—and neither of which indicates that the husband may have his duties and responsibilities also. On the other hand, this doctrine of Cibber and Murphy is virtually the same as the one Philip Barry has been preaching in a half dozen plays of "ideas" in our own day; so perhaps the twentieth century should not gloat too much.

Yes, our older dramatists recognized and grappled—in a provisional way—with the problems of class-consciousness and business (Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London*; Dekker's *The Shoemakers' Holiday*; Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*; Lillo's *The London Merchant*), education (Shadwell's *The Squire of Alsatia*), gambling (the two *Gambler* plays by Susannah Cent-

livre and Edward Moore), racial discrimination and persecution (the sentimental comedies of Richard Cumberland), the Demon Drink (Douglas Jerrold's *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life*, W. H. Smith's *The Drunkard; or, The Fallen Saved*, and W. H. Pratt's *Ten Night in a Bar Room*) and many more. But the difference between their use of such material and that of the modern dramatists of ideas is that until fairly recent times the ideas, problems, or themes were not chosen or presented primarily for their own sakes. They were used because they offered a striking character, a dramatic conflict, a good theatrical situation for comedy or melodrama, an opportunity to flatter or amuse an audience in its already established views or prejudices. Very seldom were they used as a challenge to society itself to reexamine its *mores*, to reevaluate its motives, and to reform its methods and systems of thinking and behaving. It is in this last way that the "drama of ideas" has become such a large part of the theater today and has played such an important rôle in our modern culture.

by Winifred Smith

## GREEK HEROINES IN MODERN DRESS

EVERYONE knows that Eugene O'Neill in *MOORING BECOMES ELECTRA* has given a modern, psychologized version of the tragic story of the Atridae, set in New England at the time of the American Civil War, eliminating the Greek gods and interpreting Fate in terms of human passion and of heredity and environment. The general reading public, however, even most students of the classics, are not aware of a number of recent European versions of Greek myth that retell in a still more interesting and more subtly complicated way the famous falls of Thebes, of Argos, and of Troy. In these reworkings of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides several contemporary writers use their sources as transparent veils, ostensibly concealing but actually revealing today's tragedies. Like Strindberg in *MASTER OLOF* these moderns use historic and legendary names, some ancient local color and poetic form in order "to cover a too obvious intention",<sup>1</sup> a critical intention aimed at the society of their own day or revealing their own maladjustments.

Of these plays the earliest is *DIE TROERINNEN*, written in 1911 by the Austrian Jewish poet, Franz Werfel,<sup>2</sup> a free adaptation of Euripides' *TROADES* into a moving tragedy that expresses deep grief over the Great War and a firm belief that through all its madness the spirits of good and of justice would survive to light again their extinguished torches. Hecuba's courage Werfel sees as the "yea-saying" of a singularly magnificent will to live; her scorn for the force of the victors and for their cruelty he exalts in his preface as the finest expression of a clear-sighted human being. Humanity, *Menschheit*, in fact, is for him the hero of the tragedy; "to be good is more than to be happy", is the somewhat tritely naïve but sincere note sounded at intervals throughout the play,

<sup>1</sup>A. Strindberg, *WORKS*, Stockholm ed., XIX, quoted by A. Jolivet, *LE THEATRE DE STRINDBERG*, 1931, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Pr. München, K. Wolff, 1915.

as the most human aspiration of the tormented beings suffering on the stage. Goodness is interpreted not only as love and pity but as the duty to live on, even in slavery, to endure to the end instead of taking leave of the world by suicide.

Werfel explains in his preface that Euripides' tragedy has caught his attention chiefly because it grew out of a crisis similar to that of twentieth century Europe. Hecuba he sees as "humanity itself", proved by suffering, though she feels no sin in her that demands punishment. There's a likeness in this concept, though Werfel doesn't mention it, to Lear's cry to the deaf heavens, "I am a man more sinned against than sinning", indeed Hecuba's agony might be compared with Lear's in more than one way. But to Werfel there is no right or reason in suffering, "that man must suffer is the maddest madness of the mad world". ("Dass der Mensch leiden muss, ist . . . der unsinnigste Unsinn der unsinnigen Welt.") "The elements are imbecile", most men are fools or devils; the gods are greedy gaints, not different from men except in their greater vice, strength, and craft. The world's unreason is all mere blind instinct and chance, only here and there a human being is marked by the fearful gift of reason, which shines out no matter how shaken the mortal by the brutal forces of nature. Virtue, says this young idealist, passionately though not very originally, is the result of the conflict of man and the cosmos; tragedy is the spark lit by the polar current between Life and Mind. So Chaos becomes Cosmos. The perception of the contradictions in the universe, which Hecuba is able to make because of her strength and nobility, gives meaning to her pain, though she can never explain why a mother must bear children only to see them destroyed before her eyes. Yet she is strong enough to "take life to her heart", to stand up under cruel blows, in the belief that eventually humanity may be able to impose reason on the irrational universe. The gods disappear but man remains to give the world its only valid meaning—ethical responsibility.

The preface closes, like so many other writings of our period, with a vague prophecy of revolution, a cleansing storm "not very near, in spite of the shrill death cries of individualism", but inevitable as the outcome of the agonies of many Hecubas today, which may be the birth pangs of a new age. Thus Werfel looks

back to Euripides as to one of the prophets of the "new age" which followed dying Greece, the Christian era, with its faith in salvation through sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> *DIE TROERINNEN* is consistently based on this conception, quite different actually from the original, though in many passages the text renders the source faithfully.

In order to clarify his intention still further Werfel repeats some of the ideas of his preface in a prolog for the play's first production at the Burgtheater in Vienna. In this three figures, a god of the Trojans in "barbaric mask", a "gegen Göttin" in archaic Greek dress, and the golden-haired shade of Astyanax in a nimbus of light, appear one after the other and in simple verse express their several views of Troy's destruction. The shrines are broken, the altars crack, the King is dead, Helen alone sleeps well, says the defeated god of Troy. The Greek goddess admits her people triumph for the moment, though they don't deserve to and will be punished in their turn, for "no god loves mankind", an opinion with which her antagonist agrees, for "men are full of fear and vanity and will to power". As these two savage figures swear the destruction of the human race, their own destruction is prophesied by the little spirit of Hector's son, who appears to an accompaniment of harp music and asserts that "Pain is the fruitful earth of the soul", "Love is the cause of Life", "I must die today but I shall return purified", "The gods bring only woe to us". And the weird light of this *Götterdämmerung* fades away into the cold early dawn, showing the desolate Trojan women on the steps of their ruined citadel, Hecuba, with her "Christian face"<sup>4</sup> in their midst. Not much more need be said about the action and dialog which follow, except that the whole is an invective against the futility and waste of war so eloquent that the play has been banned in the Reich since 1933. The disguise of classic story and the fine scenic inventions added to it cannot conceal its dangerous thoughts or permit its production in a militarized country.

Compared with this highly emotional German version of Troy's end, Jean Giraudoux' dramatization of the beginning of that end, *LA GUERRE DE TROIE N'AURA PAS LIEU*,<sup>5</sup> seems at a first reading

<sup>3</sup>Cf. his "Die Christliche Sendung", a letter to K. Hiller in *DER TÄTIGER GEIST*, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup>W. Paulsen, *EXPRESSIONISMUS UND AKTIVISMUS*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>First printed in *LA PETITE ILLUSTRATION*, 14 Dec., 1935.



less profoundly tragic because it is so much calmer than Werfel's poem and is so often lightened by cynical wit. Further study of the text, however, shows Giraudoux' underlying philosophy to be far less traditionally and hopefully religious than Werfel's and a good deal truer to certain contemporary scientific interpretations of an amoral universe, careless of mankind. The title is, of course, ironic. Hector and his soldiers return from a victorious battle fed up with fighting and determined that it must end. All the women in the play except the seeress, Cassandra, and Helen, the personification of the eternal illusion of beauty, agree with Hector and prophesy that there will be, there *must* be, no more war,—how can war be permitted when love demands peace, for domestic happiness, for children's little lives, for the cultivation of the fields and of the arts? But Cassandra relentlessly reiterates, "War will come again"; there are no gods to prevent it, man's passions, not his reason, rule.

And so in fact it turns out. War with Greece begins as the last curtain falls, in spite of the entirely rational plot of Hector and Ulysses to prevent it by an untruthful tale of Helen's innocence, concocted to placate Menelaus, by the Trojan offer to return her, unharmed, to Sparta, and by her willingness to go back, cool-headed, impersonal, empty-headed butterfly that she is. All this carefully thought-out plan to save Troy goes for nothing because of the beauty worship of the mob, particularly of the senile statesmen, the hero worship and honor worship of young hot heads, and especially of the stupid, patriotic Trojan poet whose war song Hector will not hear and whose vengeful lie at the end of the play precipitates the "incident" which makes peace impossible. "Torheit und Wahnsinn", Werfel calls war; madness and folly and the hold on mankind of silly, outworn, inherited ideals, Giraudoux hopelessly makes clear, cause these outbreaks of mass suicide which curse the race. But the Frenchman refuses to idealize the curse in any way or to see in suffering the mother of virtue. Suffering is inevitable but bad, he thinks, all bad, there is no excuse for it. It goes on, nevertheless, from age to age, as it will, he more than suggests, go on to eternity, with men the instinct-and-illusion-driven, violent animals they are. Hector and Ulysses, like Briand and Stresemann, rare statesmen capable of reasonable,

workable, humane plans, are powerless against the irrationality of the many. Even mother love, the strongest of the instincts, is powerless,—destructive urges are stronger than creative.

Giraudoux obviously agrees with Shaw that "the ideals suggested to us by our unsatisfied passions" are racial poisons for which no antidote has yet been found. In his *ELECTRA*, written in 1937 and as beautifully produced by Jouvet as was *LA GUERRE DE TROIE*, he relentlessly analyzes Electra's uncompromising father-worship and her belief in her duty to revenge his death, though the cost of her fidelity to this duty is again a war, and violent death, not only of the guilty but of countless innocent souls as well. *ELECTRA* is more complexly orchestrated on several themes than the earlier play and draws from more sources. *HAMLET* has contributed something toward the tragedy, as Crémieux pointed out in the *NOUVELLE REVUE*, June 1, 1937,<sup>9</sup> though most of it grows directly out of the Greek myths centering around Mycenae, and out of Aristotle's words about the purgative value of tragedy. What is tragedy but "a fine spectacle" to the gods? To Electra also it is a fine spectacle, as at the end of the play she watches the flames of the burning city, the symbol of her accomplished vengeance after long years of waiting.

Electra the absolutist, who lives by a memory and a dream, Clytemnestra, the pragmatic relativist, who wishes to forget the past in which a great crime, also a legitimate revenge, an act of "justice", was only a momentary stage in a long chain of cause and effect adjustments, these two women carry the burden of the tragic conflict, a conflict of ideas, of interpretation of life, that is very vital though more remote from every day human interests than the war-peace antithesis in the *TROJAN WOMEN*. The chorus, consisting of a beggar, a god in disguise, and the three Fates who grow from naughty children in the first act to sinister young women resembling Electra in the last, comment at intervals on the tragic destiny which inevitably approaches and remind the heroine that her stubborn will leads her to a selfish pride that destroys her humanity. She retorts, "J'ai ma conscience, j'ai Oreste, j'ai la justice, j'ai tout." The Eumenides lay at her door the de-

<sup>9</sup>But cf. Gilbert Murray on *HAMLET AND ORESTES*, where the many correspondences between the two great myths are discussed, an essay which Giraudoux, well read in English literature, may very possibly know.

struction her relentlessness has brought about, as they depart to pursue Orestes in his madness "till he shall die of despair, cursing his sister." She, unshaken:

"J'ai la justice. J'ai tout,"

and in fact "justice" of the old tribal sort has been done on the suspected criminals, whose crime in this tragedy has never been confessed or even quite certain, so mixed are "fact" and hate and dream in Electra's mind. The beggar god in the play's last words interprets the red light of the burning city as "the dawn". Irony again, perhaps? Or another *Götterdämmerung* prophetic of revolution?

Electra is not the only Greek heroine to attract the attention of modern dramatists. Antigone rivals her in interest for contemporaries. In one French and two German plays this most vivid of Greek maidens is revived and given great significance for our day. Walter Hasenclever, like Werfel, only twenty-four years old in 1914, has poured into his *ANTIGONE* (wr. 1915, pr. 1917) all his own suffering through the Great War's violence and starvation, his pity for the masses and his belief that Antigone's spirit of love will be an inspiration to later ages. He uses his chorus with particular effectiveness, keeping a large group of poor folk, soldiers and women, on the stage most of the time; they begin with a scene of rejoicing over the end of the war in Thebes, though joy is darkened by comments on the "evil times". Many of the people are hungry, Creon is a tyrant who orders the starving to be beaten or killed when they ask for bread. Their cries are drowned out by the soldiers' drunken orgy, though the triumphant procession is constantly interrupted by cries of "Where are the dead?" Creon closes the first act by saying, in reply to an old man's question, "What is right?" "I decide; my will is right."

This tone of Creon's gives the key to his character, for Hasenclever has personified in him the ruthless will to power itself, developing to the utmost every hint in the original that the ruler identifies the State with himself. "If any man", Sophocles has him say, "makes a friend of more account than his fatherland, that man hath no place in my regard." The German Führer of

<sup>1</sup>R. C. Jebb's translation, p. 45.

Thebes, after announcing his impious decision to let Polynices' body lie unburied, piles threats and curses on all who disobey him, and when Antigone is captured after her disobedience, the debate between her and Creon brings out more fully than does Sophocles the contrast between her law of love and his merciless "Macht". "Gott ist mit uns", he says—boldly Hasenclever uses this favorite phrase of the Kaiser in Creon's reply to Antigone that "God lives" and that she is doing his will; "God is even with our enemies", she adds, thus causing the mob to yell for her death, even as another mob to whom Pilate showed a man accused of crime cried out, "Crucify him!"

"I shall not die", the heroine replies, "The faith that my deed expresses will survive." And in the last act her faith is symbolized by the dead girl's rising from her tomb and lighting a torch that remains brightly burning after she, all spirit as she now is, has glided away into eternity.

From the moment of Creon's sentencing Antigone the chief interest of this play lies in its portrayal of the conflict in the crowd between sympathy for the victim and its hatred of her as a traitor who "treats with the enemy". Sophocles' great ode to man is omitted, as are the other choric odes, but their substance has been partly absorbed into the mob scenes. Antigone identifies herself completely with the poor and miserable, confesses her remorse for having lived in luxury while so many hungered, and goes to her death humbly, feeling herself at last the equal of each human being whose pain she is expiating for love's sake. She calls on women to realize the horrors of war and to fight against them; the crowd rallies momentarily to her defense, only to be beaten off by the guard as the princess tells the king his power is gone, his "world is no more". Even as she speaks, a horseman catches her up on his saddle and bears her off to the tomb, "her hair sweeping the ground".

A night scene of the expressionistic type follows, a dream of Creon's, possibly inspired by Richard III's vision of the angry ghosts of his victims; Creon's remorse is roused, but too late; Antigone is dead, Haemon kills himself, the crowd turns on the ruler and stones him, so enraging him that he orders the city fired. "Die Welt geht unter!" The mob shouts, and only a few of them have

the faith to cry "Die neue Welt bricht an!" In the final scene after the death of the Queen and Tiresias, Creon confesses his crimes, takes off his sword and crown and goes to the wilderness to do penance like an early Christian hermit, while the chorus sings, "We are free", and a voice from the tomb closes the tragedy: "God has judged. Pray, guilty men!"

This is an exciting, passionately rebellious version of the noble ancient poem, perhaps the most theatrically effective of all the modern reworkings of Greek tragedy. Bernard Diebold<sup>8</sup> criticizes the last two acts as unnecessarily melodramatic and regrets the "intrusion" into the legend of the World War and the caricatures of such leaders as the Field Marshall, perhaps intended for Ludendorff, but to the author, who chose this story just because it could be adapted to fit our times, his emphatic exaggerations were essential if the play were to be understood as the criticism of Prussian tyranny it was meant to be. It is sad to add that Hasenclever soon discovered his views were at a discount in his native land during the later 1920's and that he tried to live down his youthful iconoclasm by producing a series of box-office successes in which Antigone gave way to Aphrodite, and an Aphrodite not of the Uranian sort.

In fact, few of the rebels among the German poets of the immediate post-war years were able to continue writing against tyranny and war, as their hopes of reconciliation were dashed both at home and abroad. One more version of the Antigone story was printed, however, less intense and provocative than the earlier one, longer, more epical, and more formal in style. Max Mell's *SIEBEN GEGEN THEBEN* (1931) keeps Oedipus and Jocasta alive to suffer in the deaths of three children; only toward the end Jocasta dies of heartbreak when the news of her sons' fatal duel reaches her. There are many spectacularly beautiful scenes described in the stage directions of this play; the chorus is present at times, though not constantly; several interesting minor characters are introduced, such as a gardener, a loyal slave who helps Antigone bury Polynices; and much is made of a thunderstorm, sent by the gods, which allows the burial of the dead prince almost to escape detection. Almost, but not quite. Antigone is naturally sus-

<sup>8</sup>In *ANARCHIE IM DRAMA*, pp. 327 ff.

pected, confesses her "crime" boldly and goes to her death as nobly though more quietly than Hasenclever allows her to do. Creon is again a merciless tyrant, who sees eye to eye with Eteocles in the matter of ways to rule the masses by force and iron discipline. The principal theme of the tragedy is made evident by the contrast between Eteocles in golden armor, proud of his descent from the dragon's teeth, determined to make Thebes strong and dominant over her neighbors by tremendous walls and great armament, and Polynices, dressed as a shepherd and entering the city to ask for peace and concord, so that all the people may enjoy the simple pleasures of nature lovers like himself. Creon, the partner of Eteocles, and Antigone, who shares Polynices' aims, are both defeated after the death of the brothers, for the play ends, after Antigone's execution and the suicide of Haemon and the queen, by the king's fainting on the palace steps while the triumph he had ordered to celebrate his coronation carries by him the empty symbols of his power.

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity", seems to express the final mood of this play. Rebellion against the powerful brings defeat, and a nemesis in turn follows, the dream remains, no more. Max Mell is a less hopeful rebel than Werfel and Hasenclever, though the inspiration of his work is, like theirs, undoubtedly rebellion against things as they are. It is a mood similar to that expressed by Jean Cocteau in the letter to Jacques Maritain which prefaces his *ANTIGONE*: "L'instinct me pousse toujours contre la loi", a mood very general in post-war youth. Such an "instinct" psychologists are tracing to its roots in childhood experiences of frustration and repression, of which the modern period furnishes its most striking examples in its Führers and Duces. Cocteau, like the young Hasenclever, has been extraordinarily preoccupied with problems of childhood and adolescence and has given in his *ENFANTS TERRIBLES* and his *PARENTS TERRIBLES*, as well as in his ghastly versions of the Oedipus legend, ample evidence of the hold on him of infantile terrors and attachments. His *ANTIGONE*, the chief success of Dullin's first season of the *Atelier* (1922), where it was played in masks, with scenery by Picasso and music by Honegger, is a surrealist tragedy, unreal and haunting as a bad dream, with few of the social revolutionary implications of its



German contemporaries. It is "a photograph of Greece from an aeroplane", according to the author, an abbreviated version of Sophocles, intended to challenge its audience to a fresh appreciation of the original, but actually calling attention chiefly to the theatrical tricks at which its author and producer excel. The choruses, for instance, greatly shortened, are spoken "very fast and loud", by a voice coming from an opening in the middle of the stage, and in the 1927 production this opening was framed by five monumental plaster heads of young men. The speaking characters wore transparent masks "like fencers" through which their white faces could be "divined", and their white costumes, draped over black tights made them look "like a family of insects in a sordid yet regal carnival". Creon talks constantly of bribery, suspecting the guard of concealing the truth about Polyneices' burial because he's been well paid to do so. Antigone confesses her "crime" gladly, for she knew it would cost her death; "I shall die young. *Tant mieux!*" Tiresias describes unpleasantly the desecration of the altars by the bleeding fragments of Polyneices' body which the dogs and vultures have laid on them. At the end Creon is overwhelmed by madness and despair, "the thunder has fallen on my head." The chorus closes the gruesome "carnival" with "too late, Creon, too late."

Even more weird than ANTIGONE is Cocteau's second attempt to rework the Oedipus myths, *LA MACHINE INFERNALE* (1939).<sup>9</sup> His first *OEDIPE* was written as a libretto for a Stravinsky ballet and when given by gigantic masked puppets at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York was strangely impressive in the visions of obscure terror it created. *THE INFERNAL MACHINE*, a "chef d'oeuvre de monstruosité"<sup>10</sup> if ever there was one, is a much more completely developed tragedy and has been several times played with success, though whether any production has realized Cocteau's intention it is hard to be sure. In varied tempo, in sultry night atmosphere, full of thunderstorm premonitions, and through symbolic imagery, the deadly incantation of Fate is woven; Jocasta's red scarf, which in the first act almost chokes her as it catches on something, and in the last act serves as her executioner, her

<sup>9</sup>First played at Comédie des Champs Elysées, 1934. Translated, with interesting preface by C. Wildeman, Oxford Press, 1936.

<sup>10</sup>*LES PARENTS TERRIBLES*, 1938, p. 95.



sharp pointed brooch, sharp as the claws of the deadly Sphinx, the instrument of Oedipus' self-blinding at the end, her live, white face at the beginning of the tragedy, as dead as the ghostly emanation of Laius, of which she is conscious, though she can't see it, or of her own ghost at the end, the jackal-headed Anubis, the death-god who prowls on the desert by the sphinx, drawing nearer and nearer to the doomed palace, all these are skilfully repeated images of terror which build up "the sense of something submerged and estranged", of "a somnambulist with feet tied", which Marianne Moore defines as the major impression the play creates.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps this merging of visual and auditory sense impressions into a general fear revulsion is what Cocteau's, like Dalí's, work is principally able to produce. In the case of both these artists exquisite technical perfection is made to serve nightmares, sometimes sinister, sometimes comic. In Cocteau's *ORPHEE*, which Antoine wrongly called "un farce d'atelier même pas drôle", the fantasy produces a series of mild shocks which evoke laughter as well as shivers. In *LA MACHINE INFERNALE*, however, though there is wit and *bizarrierie*, the whole effect is the opposite of comic, even though it is not significant enough to be deeply tragic. This play, as one French critic pointed out,<sup>12</sup> "sought its motivation in the physiogical depths (*dessous*) of the drama, about which Sophocles was silent." It is these "depths", probed by dreams and by drugs, that surrealist artists are constantly concerned with. Those interested in tracing these matters further and courageous enough to face unpleasantness will find a good deal of illumination in Cocteau's "journal of disintoxication", *OPIMUM*,<sup>13</sup> particularly in its ghastly pictures, a serial register of the artist's sensations in tortured images. Such pictures show clearly enough the hallucinations which the playwright has been able to build into his reinterpretation of Greek legend and strongly suggest that the psychoanalyst's theories about the origins of myth in dreams and the subconscious are not so fantastic as critics often assume.<sup>14</sup>

The contrast between Cocteau's *INFERNAL MACHINE*, with its

<sup>11</sup>THE NATION, Review of C. Wildeman's trans., Feb. 6, 1937.

<sup>12</sup>NOUVELLE REVUE FRANCAISE, 1 mai, 1934.

<sup>13</sup>Paris, Stock, 1931.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Macchioro, FROM ORPHEUS TO PAUL, N. Y., 1930.

perverse mysticism and its invective against whatever gods there are, and André Gide's cold *OEDIPE* (1931) produces a sensation like that of emerging from a smoky cellar into a dark November noon. A series of dialogs between pairs of individuals expresses again and again the leading theme of the play—incestuous love which is near hate, love not only between Jocasta and Oedipus but also between the two brothers and their sisters. Such is the “rationalization” of Antigone's motive in the deed which made her famous and which is only forecast, not carried out, in this tragedy. Not alone lovers of Sophocles will resent this interpretation and refuse to admire Gide's often subtle debates over the vanity of human desires for happiness and the poison in human nature itself which defeats them. The play has no dramatic vitality at all, perhaps the only one among the many modern versions of Greek myth of which this can be fairly said.

Just how many other modernizations of the classics can be found in the twentieth century repertory it is hard to say, for often the Greek source theme is so overlaid with recent theory or with fresh local color that it is almost hidden from sight. Such is the case with O'Neill's powerfully tragic *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS*, through which echoes, very distantly, the desperate cry of Phaedra. Such again is Franz Werfel's *Dionysiac Passion Play*, *BOCKSGESANG*, remotely but unmistakably related to the *BACCHAE* and its Mystery source. The list could be greatly expanded, if parallels were stretched a little, but perhaps it is unnecessary to continue the comparisons. The examples given are enough to prove, if proof were needed, the great vitality of Greek tragedy and the significant ways it can be remolded today and made to express once more “the tragic feeling for life” which is dominant in an age of war and revolution.

## A GREAT EDUCATOR

CHANCELLOR KIRKLAND OF VANDERBILT. By Edwin Mims. Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press 1940. Pp. 362.

To raise the level of education in an entire region and to build a great university are two very remarkable achievements. For a man to do either is a rare accomplishment. For him to do both is for him to stand among the distinguished men and women of his day. That is the story of the life of James Hampton Kirkland of Vanderbilt, for he lifted the level of education in the South more than any other man, and he builded a great university.

When James Hampton Kirkland became Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, in 1893, Southern college and university education was in a confused state. The colleges had no requirements for admission and almost all of them offered their students a large amount of secondary school work. It was Kirkland more than any one else, and to an extent more than all others, who made college education in the South real in fact as well as in name and who established the present level of scholarship and academic merit in the Southern colleges and universities. He rescued Southern college education from chaos. He removed secondary school subjects from the college and preparatory school. The quality of higher education in the South today is due largely to Chancellor Kirkland.

This he accomplished in the main through the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, which he founded in 1895. This organization, growing in strength and influence under Kirkland's leadership, became a potent factor in maintaining academic standards for all institutions of learning in the Southern States. Partly, he accomplished it by the example set at Vanderbilt University.

At the time the Chancellor took office as executive head of Vanderbilt University, the institution had an enrollment of approximately two hundred students and an endowment of less than one million dollars. During his term of office he brought the enrollment to fifteen hundred students, raised an endowment of over twenty-three million dollars, created one of the finest medical schools in America, gave the whole University an excellent faculty, and provided the institution with adequate equipment. And as

he accomplished these things, he improved the quality of academic work until Vanderbilt stood in the front ranks of the institutions of higher education in our country.

For forty-four years Kirkland was Chancellor of Vanderbilt. At his retirement in 1937 he was the dean of American college presidents, having been Chancellor of Vanderbilt for a longer period than any other college executive then in office had served his institution. Many times he was tempted by invitations from colleges and universities larger and wealthier than Vanderbilt. But he followed constantly and devotedly the star that shone on "a city's western border", and with his own courage and resourcefulness he personified the meaning of the words in Vanderbilt's Alma Mater, "Forward ever be our watchword".

All this is vividly told in his biography of Chancellor Kirkland of Vanderbilt, by Dr. Edwin Mims, Professor of English at Vanderbilt University for the past thirty years, at one time the pupil himself of Chancellor Kirkland at Vanderbilt, and at all times the Chancellor's comrade and associate.

When one writes a book about a great man he knows well, it is very likely that the intimacy of a close friendship will tempt the author to eulogize the distinguished person in extravagant terms or to damn him with faint praise. It is a triumph of understanding and perspective when a biographer, who tells the story of the life of a dear friend, escapes both dangers and can paint a picture of the man that is true to life.

This is the achievement of Dr. Mims. The chief characteristic of the book is the restraint of the author which makes even more effective the revelation of the Chancellor's greatness and the far-reaching influence of his life. One is led to go on from chapter to chapter because he feels the author is presenting an unadorned appreciation of the man, built upon an insight and perception that cannot be mistaken. And when the reader has finished the last sentence of the story, woven out of the words of a simple and direct style, often beautiful in its expression, he is certain that he comprehends the important facts and the significance of the life of Vanderbilt's Chancellor.

The biography begins with the ancestry and family of Chancellor Kirkland, his home and his boyhood days, all of which constituted the background which produced the future Chancellor,

the soil in which the roots of the man's character and personality grew. Undoubtedly his ancestry and his training contributed to a great degree to the qualities of character that accounted for his remarkable career.

Then follows the description of his college days, his study abroad in Germany, and the first years at Vanderbilt as teacher of Latin. There is the thrilling narrative of his years as Chancellor of Vanderbilt and the growth of the University under his gifted leadership, an epic in itself. There is the story of the founding of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools by Chancellor Kirkland and the outstanding contribution Dr. Kirkland made to Southern education through the Southern Association and through his own labors. The book describes clearly and correctly the struggle between the Chancellor and the Methodist Church over the question of final control of the institution. It concludes with a picture of the man as a citizen of his country, an individual in his community, and a trusted leader of his people.

The book is dedicated to Mary Henderson Kirkland, "golden link between Vanderbilt University and the world beyond its campus", wife of the Chancellor, who gave her husband much of the strength and faith that stood him in good stead.

Not only has the author written with sure knowledge, but he has selected in a most fortunate manner out of the wealth of material at his command those events and incidents which form the true pattern of Chancellor Kirkland's life. The book is, indeed, an excellent biography, interesting, readable, and most worth while, especially for those who desire to know a man whose life played an important part in shaping the events of his day.

Above the exceptional achievements of the Chancellor stands the man himself. Student, scholar, and teacher, he was one of this country's ablest executives, and one of the few truly great Southerners of his day. Diligent and untiring in work, fearless and bold in conflict, he was gentle in manner, tender in spirit, and considerate in thought and deed. In his community as well as in his college, he lived a rich, useful, and varied life, finding time, among his many duties, to become famous through the cultivation of the iris, the flower he loved so well.

The challenge to the South today is for more leaders in the field of education like Chancellor Kirkland, men endowed with

scholarship, intelligence, and understanding of the meaning and purpose of education, with the wisdom to find, recognize, and interpret the truth, and with the fortitude to champion high ideals.

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### À LA LANTERNE!

**LANTERNS ON THE LEEVE.** *Recollections of a Planter's Son.* By William Alexander Percy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Pp. 348. 1941.

**LANTERNS ON THE LEEVE** reveals a resolved duality in its author: a Southern gentleman of the democratic Delta. It discloses William Alexander Percy as Hotspur and "Peeps". Names sometimes do things to their possessors, especially if the possessors are poets. Does it really matter if a Mississippi Percy is veridically a lineal descendant of Hotspur Percy? If the Delta planter and poet playfully imagined himself inheriting the blood of Shakespeare's Hotspur, he exposed himself to the possible fate of becoming a Miniver Cheevy of Mississippi. But if he never succumbed to that dismal destiny, his gentle soul was, I suppose, corrected by the haunting query of his negro nurse who crooned to him when he was young and tender, "What's the madder, Peeps. Whut you cryin' fur?"

**LANTERNS ON THE LEEVE** weaves the wails of "Peeps" into the gallant defiance of a Hotspur at bay. Will Percy as "Peeps" had much to cry about. There was, for instance, the beautiful Mississippi plantation life in the Delta which he so affectionately and unforgettably depicts: a culture of which his grandfather and father were part, and which passed into oblivion, except in loyal memories, during Will Percy's lifetime. Then, too, there was the dissolution of his own religious faith, marked by his sad withdrawal from the Roman Catholic dogma of his youth, leaving him chiefly Marcus Aurelius and Browning with which to face a world obviously not made for him. Even his pursuit of the Muse was a chase after evanescence; for during his passionate creative career as poet, adventurers in aesthetics caused a shift in poetic sensibilities of his generation. While taste shifted to

neglected poets like Donne, Marvel, and Hopkins, Will Percy was faithful to his Cynara after his own fashion.

But, in spite of these frustrations of Will Percy's genius and good intentions, he wept, perhaps only to himself, but offered to the world a resolute face, a kind wisdom, and a brave humor. His soul had been shaped by Sewanee. The story he relates of his father's experiences in a death-grip with forces of Mississippi ignorance, vulgarity, chicanery—epitomized in the notorious demagogue who supplanted the elder Percy as United States Senator—is a case history of cheap manipulations of the plebiscite in Percy's native State. But Hotspur, gallant, chivalrous, and true-hearted—victoriously emerges in *LANTERNS ON THE LEVEE*: Hotspur emerges victorious over his inevitable "Peeps".

*LANTERNS ON THE LEVEE* is not a biography: it is a gospel. Only enough of the author's life is given to create a convincing and impressive interpretation of an eminently adorable region of these United States: the Mississippi Delta. Here is a disclosure of that region by a refined, high-minded aristocrat: baffled but not beaten by the raw miscellany of an undisciplined democracy. Throughout the book the ominous threat of Ole Man River hovers with symbolic portent, all the more piercing because it is implicit, powerful in its poetic hint.

Once read, *LANTERNS ON THE LEVEE* will not be forgotten by those to whom the reading of a worthy book, however newly published, is a rewarding experience. It is both a work of art and a human document. Its human touch, however, evokes my sceptical response at one point. The twenty-fourth chapter, "For the Younger Generation", seems to me to be a needless "let-down" after the exalted beauty of chapter nine, "Sewanee". The stoic fortitude, recommended in the former, has its heroics; but they are, at best, only the minute heroics of a "Peeps" ("Peeps, whut you cryin' fur")—they are feeble and ineffectual when they are seen in the perspective of the magnanimous, Christian acts of the Mississippi lawyer and planter's son, William Alexander Percy: Sewanee's poet and grand man of the Mississippi Flood of 1927. Why should Percy as Hotspur join the rabble in their outburst against Christian belief, crying, "A la Lanterne!"? His work belies his words to the younger generation.

WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER



## IS ART A PART OF "LIFE"?

COURBET AND THE NATURALISTIC MOVEMENT. ESSAYS READ AT THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART. MAY 16, 17, 18, 1938. Edited by George Boas. The Johns Hopkins Press.

The question whether the history of art is independent of, or correlated with, the history of other human activities should be of interest to historian, critic, and philosopher alike. Can we expect to find in the art of any period a reflection of, or clue to, the social, religious, scientific, philosophic thought of the day; or is it apart from the general *Zeitgeist*?

For the sake of any who may feel disposed to express surprise at hearing that there is such a question, let me cite the opinion of the English art critic, Roger Fry,<sup>1</sup> as follows:

The foregoing violently foreshortened view of history and art will show, I hope, that the usual assumption of a direct and decisive connection between life and art is by no means correct. What this survey suggests to me is that if we consider this special spiritual activity of art, we find it no doubt open at times to influences from life, but in the main self-contained—we find the rhythmic sequences of change determined much more by its own internal forces—and by the readjustment within it, of its own elements—than by external forces. I admit, of course, that it is always conditioned more or less by economic changes, but these are rather conditions of its existence at all than directive influences. I also admit that under certain conditions the rhythms of life and of art may coincide with great effect on both; but in the main the two rhythms are distinct, and as often as not play against each other.

In response to such a statement one may, of course, protest against contrasting art with "life", as if it were not a part of the latter. This aesthetectomy, if the term be permitted, this amputation of art and setting it apart as something different from rather than a part of life, is, to be sure, artificial and academic; but, nonetheless, a real problem has been posed, and the logomachy is incidental. Mr. Fry would agree, as soon as anyone else, that art is a part of life; he would only insist that it is a relatively autonomous part.

<sup>1</sup>VISION AND DESIGN, pp. 17-18, Penguin Books Limited, 1937.

The book here reviewed is designed to prove just the opposite—that art is not only a part of life, but that it is a characteristic, integral, and representative part, directed in its development by the same influences which affect the other parts, and reflecting or expressing the same general character which is manifested in the other intellectual and spiritual movements of the day. It may be the first, or the last, to exhibit a certain trend; but its trends are in harmony with those of other fields of human activity.

COURBET AND THE NATURALISTIC MOVEMENT is a series of essays by professionals in the several fields of fine arts, literature, history, music, and philosophy. The papers were originally read as a symposium designed "to test an hypothesis about the history of art: that any artistic movement spreads beyond the limits of a particular art to the various non-artistic activities which characterize an epoch. Thus Romanticism in its various forms was as much a manner of writing music as it was a manner of writing poetry, as much a way of composing dramas as a way of painting pictures. In fact, the movement had its scientists, its philosophers, even its journalists, Delacroix, Berlioz, Byron, Victor Hugo, the Schlegels, Schelling, *Le Globe*, are names that immediately occur to one when the word 'Romanticism' is mentioned. When one comes to write the history of this current of ideas and complex of tastes, one must perforce study all these men and many more."

If these lectures are meant "to test an hypothesis", the only test is in the judgment of the public, for the authors have already made up their minds. The test is not whether the authors can come to a conclusion, but whether they can convince their readers. With one reservation the present reviewer feels that they have plead their case very successfully. Probably no one can read the book and not be convinced that during the first half of the nineteenth century in France the development of art was very closely parallel to the developments in literature, music, science, and philosophy. Of course, one is not justified in jumping to the conclusion that in all countries and at all times a similar parallelism is to be found. And it would be unfair to Mr. Fry to assume without further evidence that this was not one of the exceptions to which he alluded, when "the rhythms of life and art may coincide with great effect on both".

It is to be hoped, therefore, that this symposium will provide the precedent and stimulus for studies of other periods. As far as it goes, this work certainly is more thorough and convincing than Mr. Fry's admittedly "violently foreshortened view of history".

The book is very good reading. Indeed, it is so full of penetrating and elegant sentences that one is tempted to quote it extensively. Little effort is made to evaluate the naturalistic movement. The primary purpose is to define it and compare it with the thought of the time in fields other than painting.

Perhaps the best epitome of the naturalistic attitude is found in a remark of Courbet's, "*Si vous voulez que je peigne des deesses, montrez-moi-*z-en*!*" This feeling that one should paint only what one can see, and (which is worse) everything that one can see, was certainly identical with the feeling of novelists like Zola or Champfleury, or zoölogists like Lyonet or Magendie (in whom it was less reprehensible), or philosophers like LaMettrie or Comte. Even that most abstract of human inventions, music, was infected with the desire to imitate natural sounds, though, happily, it never went to the extent of confining itself to them. The "calls of birds, the barking of dogs, the braying of asses, the rustling of leaves, the rippling of brooks, and the familiar sounds of rain, wind, and thunder", the ticking of clocks, the hopping of the frog, the crow of the cock, and too many other natural sounds to mention are found in the music of the nineteenth century.

It is true that the avowed purpose of the naturalists—to record everything which they saw, knew, or experienced, without distortion, selection, or comment, was not always granted as sincere by their critics. They were accused of seeing, and wanting to see, only the ugly, sordid, and decadent. And their boast that they were above morality in their effort to describe the world as it is, brought the retort from Henry James that "to eliminate the moral element in appreciating a work is as sane as it would be to eliminate in judging a poem all three-syllable words or to consider only such portions of it as had been written by candle-light."

Their claim of pure objectivity was thus not always acknowledged, but it remained their claim. And, whether successfully carried out or not, their purpose was thus the same as that of an

early and imperfect stage of biological science—namely, the unreflecting, literal observation and recording of unadorned, uninterpreted, unselected, and meaningless facts. As such, Naturalism was in a sense neither science nor art. For mature science, no less than art, must organize and interpret what it observes.

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### SINNER IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY LOGIC

JONATHAN EDWARDS: 1703-1758, by Ola Elizabeth Winslow. New York: The Macmillan Company. 406 pages; XII; index \$3.50.

"He that would know the workings of the New England mind in the middle of the last [i.e. the Eighteenth] century and the throbbings of its heart must give his days and nights to the study of Jonathan Edwards." So wrote George Bancroft, one of the great Nineteenth Century American historians. Miss Winslow's biography, although a narrative of his life rather than an exposition of his thought, is an excellent introduction to the subject. This is all the more true because Edwards' thought is so closely linked to his personal experience; and in turn Edwards' personal experience had a great impact on American history. John M. Mecklin in his fine study of American Dissent says that the Great Awakening, the beginning of revivalism in this country, started in the heart and soul of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards stands as a water shed not only in the life of New England but also of America. He stands at the crossroads looking backward and forward. In him Puritanism achieved its last great embodiment but with such a modification that he helped to hasten its death. He made the heroic effort to establish the absolute sovereignty of God in all His Glory; yet in this supreme effort he gave a subjective twist to the idea of Theocracy which completely undermined the authority of the visible church, paving the way for the often chaotic but sometimes profound religious experience which is the hall-mark of American Christianity for the next hundred years. While not insisting that Edwards was the sole cause

of all this, the course it took is not understandable apart from his own mystical piety. So a narrative biography is more than justified.

At the same time that Edwards was the father of American revivalism he was also the founder of that school thought known as The New England Theology. Miss Winslow points out that his greatness lies in this double contribution: "In a word, it is the greatness of one who had a determining part in initiating and directing a popular movement of far-reaching consequence, and who in addition, laid the foundation for a new system of religious thought, also of far-reaching consequence. Religious leaders have often directed popular movements. Less often they have founded systems of thought. Less often still has the same leader done both. This was, in part, the distinction of Jonathan Edwards. He was a compelling preacher and also a master logician; an evangelist and also a thinker."

Miss Winslow of course says something of Edwards' thought—and those who think of him as primarily a hellfire-and-damnation preacher must prepare for the surprise of finding much that is sublimely beautiful. Perhaps she is right in saying that his contribution was sadly cramped by his adherence to Calvinism. On the other hand, the sovereignty of God, the corner stone of Calvinism, is what Edwards builds upon. True, he justifies this in terms of idealistic metaphysics; but how can one say he would have done the same thing without the convictions which Calvinism bequeathed to him? It is the working out of his position in terms of inner spiritual experience and also in terms of a cosmic order that won him the praise of William James, who said he was the greatest thinker America has produced. And true to the best in Calvin his major emphasis is on the Mysteriousness rather than the Arbitrariness of God—the Arbitrariness makes sense only as man stands in awe before the Ultimate Mystery of life as something beyond his control.

The subsequent development of this system of thought is, as Joseph Haroutunian shows in his *PIETY VERSUS MORALISM: THE PASSING OF THE NEW ENGLAND THEOLOGY*, a gradual degradation of Edwards' thought. The dynamic went out of it and it was crystallized into an arid scholasticism until it provoked the revolt

of Unitarianism. However robust such a revolt may appear in the light of a petrified Calvinism, its optimism and its lack of the tragic sense of life leaves one cold today. The emasculation of historic Christianity continued, bolstered up by the doctrine of progress and the perfectibility of man—sociologically supported by the expansion engendered by the frontier and the industrial revolution—until the doctrines of late Nineteenth Century Christianity became a vapid and sentimental image of the Rationalism of the French Enlightenment and the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill. As H. Richard Niebuhr says in *THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN AMERICA*: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." Parrington may speak of "The Anachronism of Jonathan Edwards", and indeed Edwards was left behind in the swirl of the Revolution and the onrush of the new nation; but Edwards understood things that Jefferson or Emerson or Channing never understood—and he speaks again to men today. Therefore the study of Edwards is important not simply to understand American history better. Confronted as we are with a world that no longer conforms to the patterns of thought left us by a more optimistic age, in order to understand our world at all we must, paradoxically, first understand the Mystery of a Most Holy God, the Sovereign of History, Whose thoughts are not our thoughts and Whose ways are past finding out. Only by standing before this God in awe and humility, does man come to understand himself, his greatness and his waywardness—something which few knew better than Jonathan Edwards.

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### BEADROLL FOR SHELLEY

SHELLEY. By Newman Ivey White. New York: Knopf, 1940. 2 vols. Pp. xvi plus 748, and 642 plus xlvii.

"What," cried Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, "are your historical Facts; still more your biographical? Wilt thou know a Man,



above all a Mankind, by stringing together beadrolls of what thou namest facts? The Man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did, but what he became."

This quotation from one who thought Shelley a scoundrel appears in the second volume of Professor White's distinguished life of the poet. It raises a question which will inevitably confront the potential purchaser of the biography: Of what use to the comprehension of Shelley's poetry is a reassemblage of the facts about his life? Two other questions which this review proposes to answer are these: Is the biography convenient and dependable as a reference work? How much new material does it contain, and how much still remains to be unearthed?

The briefest possible answer to the first question is that Shelley's life and poetry were both dedicated, with almost complete unity of purpose, and from a very early date, to the political and ethical reformation of the world. Professor White's is the first biography to integrate Shelley's theory with his practice in such a way that one explains the other and both make sense. In this connection, the value of the book is considerably enhanced by the recapitulatory chapters thirty and thirty-one. The former admirably summarizes White's previous studies in the growth of Shelley's reputation; the latter is a brilliant essay on Shelley's intellectual development, laying stress upon his steady conviction of Messianic purpose. Both chapters are indispensable to the full understanding of Shelley's achievement in his own and succeeding generations. The strongly ethical nature of Shelley's poetry has usually invited socio-economic and moralistic rather than purely aesthetic criticism, and I suppose that White's criticism follows the accepted line, except in such signal departures from the usual as the autobiographical interpretation of the Madman's story in *JULIAN AND MADDALO*. The full study of Shelley's aesthetic position in its relation to his own poetical performance remains therefore to be done. Yet Professor White's analysis of *PROMETHEUS UNBOUND* and *THE DEFENSE* is a notable contribution to our knowledge of Shelley's methods as an allegorist and his aims as an aesthetician.

Students should find the volumes both useful and dependable, and convenient, despite their bulk, to hand and eye. While I



should not willingly surrender the running titles and particularly the datelines at the top of each page, I greatly regret 1) the concession to modern usage which places the notes at the end of each volume rather than at the foot of each page, and 2), what is far more important, the failure to indicate chapter numbers at the top of pages in the text for the reader's convenience in consulting the notes. But the book has other features, including a full and legible index of 147 pages in which this reviewer has been able to discover only one omission of a reference. Shelley scholars will be particularly grateful for the alphabetical list of Shelley's reading (4 double-columned pages in the index), and for the complete transcription of Mary's reading-lists for the years 1814-22, insofar as they exist. A careful reading of the volumes discloses no major errors of fact, with the negligible exception of a misreading of the first stanza in *THE WITCH OF ATLAS*. On the other side, the book clarifies once for all countless minor problems over which previous biographers have stumbled: e.g., the Tanyrallt assault; the date of Shelley's first meeting with Leigh Hunt; Shelley's relationship with Mrs. Williams.

As to new material, there is hardly a chapter of Shelley's life which has not been enriched by Professor White's care of detail. Of primary sources previously available only to Dowden he has made full use. These sources include the MS. journals of Claire Clairmont and the Gisbornes, various unpublished letters (see Appendixes I-III), and the rare *Shelley and Mary* volumes, as yet accessible in America in only three or four libraries. From all these Professor White has happily seen fit to quote extensively. In addition he has been allowed to draw with some freedom on Professor Gordon's still unpublished *Shelley Letters*.

In his use of the evidence, whether new or old, the biographer avoids the extremes of sensationalism and whitewashing. Timothy Shelley, Elizabeth Hitchener, and T. J. Hogg are sanely destigmatized, while the apocryphal legend of Harriet's moral lapse after the desertion is fully exploded. Mary receives sympathetic treatment throughout, but the book contains a strange revelation, paraphrased from Gordon, of her promise of an extra-marital liaison with Hogg in 1815. But it is in his elucidation of the darkest period in Shelley annals that White has made the most im-

portant advance over his predecessors. He summons evidence of Mary's spiritual withdrawal from her husband after Clara Shelley's death. This circumstance is deeply involved with the Hoppner scandal, which is in turn complicated by White's discovery of the papers relating to Elena, the poet's Neapolitan ward. All the related facts may never be known. But unless and until new evidence appears, Professor White's hypothesis must remain the most convincing explanation of the puzzle.

The publication of Professor Gordon's *Letters* will doubtless shed new light on Shelley. Of the extant Shelley papers those in the Bodleian have been carefully explored. But full access to two more groups, owned respectively by Lord Abinger and Sir John Shelley-Rolls, has so far been denied, I believe, even to Professors White and Gordon, while a considerable number of early poems in the Esdaile Notebooks have still to be added to the Shelley canon. It is not impossible, according to Professor White, that the third volume of Hogg's *Life of Shelley* may yet turn up.

But the big job on Shelley's life has now been done in a manner which will make this the definitive biography of the poet for many future years. The beadroll of fact has been faithfully prepared. Where dearth of evidence leaves room for doubt, all hypotheses have been considered and a tentative conclusion has been reached. But the beadroll has been everywhere illuminated, until in the end we know not merely what Shelley did as a man, but also what he became as an artist and a thinker.

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### THE SPECIAL SANCTION

NEW ENGLAND: INDIAN SUMMER. By Van Wyck Brooks; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.; 557 pp.; \$3.75.

Readers of Van Wyck Brooks' *THE FLOWERING OF NEW ENGLAND* will require no prolonged description of that book's sequel; its title is self-explanatory, and its appeal, for those as concerned with the author's method as with the period he treats of, will be considerable. In the *FLOWERING*, the age of Emerson was cele-

brated in prose as lyrical as a waterfall, and with a charity extended to each and every bard north of the Connecticut line. The socialistic Van Wyck Brooks of an earlier decade was seldom in evidence; in his place was the Whitmanian ("mystical") democrat, who endeavored by effusion to inoculate a mass audience with his own enthusiasm for the period. The new volume suffers from no dearth of felicitous expression; Brooks' reapproach is every bit as loving, but there is less to love. Emerson, Alcott, Whittier, Holmes, Longfellow, are preceptors-emeritus, although Alcott, as co-founder of the Concord School of Philosophy, makes an hoary appearance. In the main, however, Howells, Francis Parkman, Henry James, Henry Adams, Emily Dickinson, and Robert Frost are the principals of the sequel. Their personalities—and personalities, rather than ideas, are as outstanding as before—establish a foreground beyond which, in shooting-gallery fashion, the author keeps countless minor figures on the move. And, as before, the *persona non grata* is a bird conspicuous by absence.

The New England literary movement that flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century was rooted in mixed soil. It retroacted against the tonic of Puritan theology at its base; it substituted for that tonic a Unitarian nectar, over-sweet perforce because the other had been over-bitter, but the regional constitution suffered strange convulsions from the change. Dour fortitude was, after all, nearer the congenial Yankee temper than the voluptuous German metaphysic administered by a generation in giddy revolt against its miasmal precedents. In this paroxymal world of easy equations and easier apostasies, the wane of optimism and its literary consequent could not be apparent at once. The liberators, emancipating the soul from its chains and the negro from his economic milieu, saw their Utopias go up in flames, their consentaneous intelligentsia disperse for the mundane way. Finally, the Civil War, leveling regional barriers while it pricked a score of philosophical balloons, left them without animus.

Precisely what happened has intrigued literary historians ever since. Present-day letters in New England properly dates from this thinning-out: the region of Celia Thaxter, Mrs. Spofford, and Miss Jewett, has its Mary Ellen Chase, Rachel Field, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher today. On the long verandas of summer ho-

tels, vacationists discuss *ALL THIS AND HEAVEN TOO* as avidly as their grandmothers extolled the "damned mob of scribbling women" Hawthorne railed against. We have no Howells, but we have Marquand's *WICKFORD POINT*, and the difference is nominal. These writers perform skillful autopsies on the Yankee scene, but, in true undertaker style, they might be paralyzed into impotence should the corpse show a ripple of life. We have a surfeit of morticians while the situation is not yet beyond the domain of a doctor.

You cannot chronicle New England's creeping blight, as Brooks has done, and at the same time propound a valid case against Henry James and Henry Adams for their terror of the virus. Howells, settling in Boston in 1865, had annexed himself to a *Götterdämmerung* literati who still retained, in his eyes, the glamor of their noon. Rural New England, depleted of its Yankee stock, stood helpless before the rise of the modern factory, operated by immigrants and controlled by absentees. Emerson, "slightly stooping, with a shawl about his shoulders, patiently standing in line at the post-office wicket" at Concord, was a debilitated Wotan. In him the "newness" turned old eyes on a generation more allured by the Overland than by the oversoul—held spellbound by the din of the west, the speculation fever, the feats of industrial science. Mrs. Eddy had launched her career of mental healing, but one patient she overlooked was Mrs. Stowe, the morning-glory of her sex, now in a state of mental rot and rending the Hartford air with Indian war-whoops quite as witless as the midnight scuffles with M. A. M. of Mrs. Eddy herself. From the Green Mountains to the coast, vacationists repopulated the hinterland, antiquarians ravaged it. The Yankee Eden had become a waste of worked-out farms and decimated village populations whose stamina turned inward to produce "daft" characters, or, far worse, the undesirables under the elms of Eugene O'Neill. Boston was less seedy but as spiritually bankrupt,—a warehouse of collections, an historic and cultural shrine, rife with Anglomania and without renitence to stem the tide of the invading Irish.

These were aspects of the "oldness" which Henry Adams investigated before resigning himself to the periphery of the national current; the flatulent materialism from which Henry James sought

old-world shelter. On Adams, Brooks is at once perspicacious and biased; brilliant in his delineation of the evils to which E. L. Godkin brought the corrective of *THE NATION* in 1865, he yet reveals deficient understanding of what, for an Adams, being an Adams meant, and all that an Adams born to the Grantian age must deem untouchable. There are antithetical notions of duty involved here: a New Englander might more readily perceive that any other course meant the degradation and loss of all Adams had left—his name, tradition; but for Brooks, no New Englander and a socialist in the bargain, this refusal to stick it out blindly becomes near-criminal timidity. Whitmanian democrats do not hide their heads in togas. And so, "Vanity . . . was Henry Adams' governing motive, as one saw in the anonymity to which he resorted. If he could not have fame at once, he would not play . . . in motive he was always a dilettante."

This has the ring of any writer not congenial to the region, who, like Ludwig Lewisohn, would clear the court at the first introduction by the defense of that legendary trait, the New England conscience. Adams, the wise Nihilist, knew its workings well, and perhaps it is tacit recognition of some such sovereign influence that has caused Brooks thus far to skirt the seventeenth-century scene. His approach to the New England gallery is essentially that of the tourist, suspicious of the moral causality despite its genetic relation to the achievement. Any other conclusion is impossible in the light of the Adams chapters in *INDIAN SUMMER*, and the discussion of Henry James, while elaborate and intermittently generous, likewise suffers from Brooks' eagerness to underscore a favorite thesis: James, the snob, the shipboard nationalist, became abstruse and "remote from reality" in his later years because he was divorced from his native land, and could be truly at home in no other. There is much to be said for this view (James himself, I believe, first voiced it), but you can remain every inch the New Englander in Samoa, if you were a New Englander in Boston, as Adams' wanderings proved. Write a novel about the queen of the Zulus if you like; it may still be a masterly exposition of the New England mind at work—your mind. James' attitude towards upper-class Europe-England, which he distrusted and disliked, was inherently American; that his great talent might

have gained in edge and clarity had he remained at home seems certain, but for him such a course was equivalent to artistic suicide. That sulphurous and too-neglected novel, *THE BOSTONIANS*, depicts the cold reformist world he disavowed; and *THE GOLDEN BOWL*, verbose, tortuous, yet subtle and acute on its esoteric plane, suggests the warmth he found. The warmth was malarial, but the cold was pneumonic—it was a choice of fevers, if not of creative fatalities.

This dilemma—Arnold's lines about wandering between two worlds describe it neatly—is potent ammunition for proponents of regionalist dogma. Now literary sectionalism, as a bulwark against mass-production methods, is fine and desirable; also, on this roomy continent, it is so inevitable as to be a simple matter of fictioneering delegates from forty-eight states: Phil Stong, Glenway Westcott, Vardis Fisher, Mari Sandoz, Faulkner, etc. But after folk-lore, what?—the writer exhausts his native inch; his communication with it has been undynamic and exploitative, as superficial as the relation of the motorist to his Writers' Project Guide. At his debut, the white-hope of regionalist schools creates in naïveté; subsequently he faces too often the alternatives of sterility or slick professionalism. Speaking for his domain (but seldom, at this point, *from it*) becomes a racket eventually countenanced only by readers of the *SATURDAY EVENING POST*. Faulkner long ago transcended the danger, as did Jeffers, for whom California is more than a sometime matrix. Thomas Wolfe did not, and the repetitious rhapsodies poured out in the wake of *LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL* all underscore the confusion and chagrin he felt in the world beyond his region.

The relation of this problem to Brooks' reconstruction of a literary past is primary, insofar as his concept of a regional cycle (we are now, I suppose, enduring winter) violates the likelihood of a second spring. Obsessed by the folk-mind, he would reinvigorate the creative temper by "special sanctions" and a glossy set of criteria—quaintness, local color, facility with dialect—such as to render criticism impotent. Howells counts for much by these standards, and Brooks' temperate view of him here will surprise those who recall the prudish inhibitor of Clemens' satiric "genius" served up in *THE ORDEAL OF MARK TWAIN*. But Howells is vir-



tually unread today; not even in his finest novels, such as *A MODERN INSTANCE*, are the themes sufficiently independent of their period setting to retain their vitality, and his style is that of the expert craftsman, not the artist. One sees him as superior in immediate sensibility and acumen to the great body of his contemporaries, but the complacency of his approach to ultimates, the pandar eye he cocked to the tastes of his *ATLANTIC* following, deprived his ideas and insights of that capacity for fresh application which insures survival.

Howells, then, by his failure to outlast his age, would seem to belie rather than substantiate the stay-at-home doctrine; actually he does neither, since there is no cause to rate him as more than a talented journalist. Do the poets of Brooks's collection make a better case? Here we verge on what poetry means for Brooks, and it does not appear to mean much. Although he discreetly avoids citation as a clue to his models for "good", "distinguished", and "charming", we can guess from his tender treatment of Mrs. Thaxter, Lucy Larcom, Helen Hunt Jackson, etc., that their "goldenrod" verse-efforts strike responsive chords in him. Correspondingly, the knotty metaphysics of Emily Dickinson are disposed of in perfunctory, albeit respectful, fashion. Heaven only knows, Miss Dickinson was incredible enough without the gratuitous overtones of Maeterlinck furnished her here. "One saw her at dusk through the gate fluttering about the porch like a moth in the moonlight", and throughout the Dickinson chapter in *INDIAN SUMMER* one reads of her doing little else. That her more daring poems, as distinguished from her most ingenious jingles, project her as a complex being of great tenacity and psychological circumference—one, indeed, in whom the Puritan's fine scorn for non-essentials flickered anew—would seem to make an analysis of her problem imperative. This particular plant in the New England bed has roots and thorns as well as petals; after the goldenrod, it offers an experience from which one can come away without sensory inflammation.

But [says Brooks] the goldenrod rises again in its season, and the folk-poem recovers its meaning when the heart of a nation, grown old, returns to its youth. Literature abounds in special sanctions, those that govern national anthems and other expressions of faith—hymns, folk-poems and ballads—



where the only point that essentially matters is whether the feeling, being true, is also sufficiently large and important.

This proposition, not wholly untenable, compels Brooks' disinterest in Emily Dickinson (as a poet, that is; as a "gipsy moth" and a recluse she is right up his alley), and his subsequent laudation of Robert Frost, a "true folk-mind . . . a mystical democrat . . . a lover of goodness and wisdom . . . a boy and a sage at once." In him, we are told, the region was born again. To be kind, one can only suppose Brooks to be a stranger to the body of Frost's verse, in which the General Store banality and woodpile stoicism identifying all but a small number of lyrics have created for him a reputation those lyrics could not.

To be unkind (and most judgments upon Brooks's work thus far have worn the familiar encomiums to a frazzle), one might shrug *de gustibus*. But what is left? In his prefatory remarks, Brooks apologizes "for treating so inadequately the beautiful mind and spirit of William James . . . I have not ventured to discuss philosophical writers at any length. I am not competent to do so . . . I feel that these writers are related to my subject somewhat obliquely." While it can be argued with justice that the Harvard group has already received brilliant attention from Stantayana in his *CHARACTER AND OPINIO IN THE UNITED STATES*, the correlation of their ideas to phases of the New England mind is any thing but oblique, and to minimize their stature in an age of abortive *literary* effort is to enervate the picture when vitality is needed most. If Henry Adams' pessimistic view of a world in flux (which Barrett Wendel shared) can best be comprehended in perspective to Calvinist thought of the seventeenth-century; if William James's faith in the efficacy of free will refers back to Emersonian Transcendentalism; if the Hegelian zest for experience of Josiah Royce recalls nothing so much as the horror of inaction implicit in the Protestant Yankee, then these men were at once custodians and continuators of a spirit largely dissipated into inertia in the literary field. One would never grasp, from Brooks's salute to Harvard, the role played by Irving Babbitt in the adaptation of the humanist tradition to modern needs. This omission, by one of Babbitt's former students, suggests malice aforethought in a book purporting to be "exhaustive". If you cannot dispose of

a man in his sphere of positions, you leave him out; but you do not leave out Marion Crawford or Horatio Alger.

INDIAN SUMMER, like its predecessor, will appear for many to provide that desired panacea for our cultural ills—a "usable past". But since it is designed for popular consumption, its appeal is emotional at the expense of the cerebral, and Brooks, for all his phenomenal acquaintance with New England's minor literature, cannot be said to have rescued his material from the pale of the antique. He is too often content to patronize rather than estimate; one would place him far above such popular historians as John Macy, while seeing him as inferior in consistent judgment to Vernon Parrington or Barrett Wendell. His "style", which derives heavily from the pastiche method of the French biographer, Léon Bazalgette (whose THOREAU Brooks translated some fifteen years ago), can, when successful, illuminate a personality or an event in vivid colors; but it cloyes with repeated use, it exhausts its novelty. New England, never without its private pigmentations, profits little by such determined gilding. Her true portrait will always be found in her truest works, while her cranks, reformers, and Utopians have long been her own diversion.

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### THANKS TO SCHICKELGRUBER

A social problem which is spreading from country to country and continent to continent threatens to result in a good deal of regrettable activity in the United States. For a number of years anti-Semitism had almost died out in many countries, and anti-Semites were looked upon as pernicious and ignorant. Thanks in part to Schickelgruber, and in part to various other influences, the world is again dividing into two camps, Gentile and Jew, with the Jews, as usual, in the great minority.

The eternal scapegoat is playing his rôle in Europe and may soon have to play his rôle in America. At least there are indications that passionate ignorance is about to take the reins.

If anti-Semitism does flare up again in the United States, it will be the part of reasonable men and women to fight it, not because they are emotionally enthusiastic about Jews, but simply because it is a sensible course of conduct. If they are to fight it, they must know as much as possible about the problem, and knowledge about this problem is unusually difficult to get.

In the first place, there is nothing reasonable about anti-Semites, and it is consequently impossible to find any way of meeting them intelligently. Unfortunately, as anti-Semitism grows, less and less reason appears in the conduct of both Gentile and Jew. The whole problem, if it is a problem, is clouded in such a fog of passionate nonsense that it is impossible to see clearly.

Furthermore, the issue is clouded by elaborate theories. Anti-Semites, following the lead of Schickelgruber, talk about "the Jew". "The Jew" is of course as much myth as "the Aryan". But because "the Jew" is a name that can be pinned on a great many Jews and because a great many Jews fit the rather vague description of "the Jew", a great many people think that there is such a being as "the Jew". Once a person gets to admitting ideals and universals into his discourse he is apt to abandon reasonable discussion. If you set up "the Jew" you can prove anything you want to about him because you made him.

Both Jew and Gentile alike in combating anti-Semitism are much too ready to stand in front of the nebosity created by the anti-Semites and take up the battle of "the Jew". Although a good deal of good may come from such unselfish championing, still such activity does confirm in the minds of men and women the superstition that some entity exists which can be called "the Jew".

If we want to prevent unjust and irrational activity at the expense of Jews, we must find out all we can about Jews and about the reasons for their being scapegoats as often as they are. An investigation of this sort is of course a vast undertaking which would furnish laudable occupation for many brilliant men and women.

One brilliant man has contributed as much to the problem as one person can, in all probability. In his biography<sup>1</sup> Leopold

<sup>1</sup>QUEST, THE EVOLUTION OF A SCIENTIST, by Leopold Infeld. New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc. 1941. 342 pages. \$3.00.

Infeld traces his own career from the Ghetto in Cracow to a professorship in applied mathematics in the University of Toronto.

Mr. Infeld has already shown in *THE EVOLUTION OF PHYSICS*, which he wrote with Albert Einstein, that he can write fluently and clearly in English. Like another Pole, he seldom shows that he is not using his mother tongue. Consequently, *QUEST* is a readable narrative to begin with. Because it is a readable narrative it should attract many more readers than would an academic discussion of Jews and Gentiles.

Mr. Infeld makes no attempt to paint Jews in a rosy light—not even himself. He shows himself at times displaying characteristics which are extremely irritating; but, at the same time, he makes perfectly clear why at certain points in his career he did display those characteristics. He shows a community of Jews as ignorant, as unintelligently passionate, as dirty, and as stupid as Schickelgruber himself could desire. He makes it perfectly clear that such Jews naturally antagonize other people; yet, at the same time, he does not let his reader forget that many Jewish communities have been pretty much driven into such a condition. Certainly between the stupidity of the Ghetto and the stupidity of the Polish universities, there is nothing to choose. Nor is there between the cruelty of the Ghetto and the cruelty of the university faculties.

What is most interesting, perhaps, in Mr. Infeld's biography is the fact that a great many people might easily overlook: that a young man of unusual intellectual attainments had no chance whatever in the Polish and German university system if he was a Jew, and that such a young man had no chance whatever in the Jewish communities whether he was a Jew or not.

Mr. Infeld writes a good deal like a scientist in that he takes a concrete and specific datum and investigates it. He is himself the datum. He makes no vague generalities about Jews and Gentiles, but rather sticks to the specific facts of his life. He conceals nothing, he extenuates nothing, and apparently he colors nothing. He makes no bones about giving us the less pleasing features of his personality, nor does he shrink from frankly describing the tragedies of his career. But he does not wallow in his miseries. He puts them down factually and goes on to something else. He

has no pity for himself, but at the same time he has no condemnation for himself. This objectivity is rare in autobiography. Even rarer is the exposition of the reasons for his conduct. Equally rare is the tact and restraint of his story of the tragedy of his first wife. She must have been a very rare and lovely person, the Halina whom he does not forget. She could make her embittered husband understand that every man's hand was not against him, but rather that very few people took the trouble to discover his existence. She showed him that frustration produces bitterness and a sense of persecution; and her wisdom is clear when we see such manifestations disappearing from Leopold Infeld when he could look ahead to doing his job as he wanted to do it.

Once he got away from the anti-Semitic European universities, he ceased to antagonize people and could act and think with equanimity. Not the least of his sources of satisfaction and happiness is his marriage of a few years back and his prospect of living peacefully in Toronto doing the work for which he is so eminently suited.

Incorporated in his autobiography is another specific argument against anti-Semitism, and that is the sketch of Albert Einstein, with whom Mr. Infeld worked intimately for two years. Other characteristics are not perhaps very similar, but in one way Einstein immediately reminds the reader of Socrates. Not from any emotional urge, not from any sentimental or pitying attitude, Einstein is the most generous, the most charitable, the kindest of men. He is as he is, according to Mr. Infeld, because he realizes that that is the proper life of the intelligent human being: he has an intellectual conviction of the reasonableness of decency and kindness.

*Such* accounts are worth reams of theorizing on the basis of anti-Semitism, of psychologizing on the Jew, of philosophizing on the fundamentally anti-Christian motivation of anti-Semitism. Here, as in a laboratory experiment, you can see something concrete and specific, and you can understand it. Consequently, if the rumors of anti-Semitism grow, you have a better understanding of what the problem is and of the fact that it is artificial, unnecessary, and essentially absurd.

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## DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH

DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH. By Michael Fraenkel; London, C. W. Daniel Company; pp. 716.

I am not a reviewer of books, it is difficult for me to turn out judgments, opinions, warnings, the expected praise or blame. I write to myself about what is vitally important to me. Fraenkel, his writing, his talking, is of vital importance to me, so I write a few lines about him and his book.

I have read his *DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH*. It changed Fraenkel for me in some subtle way. I look for the other Fraenkel that I knew, I look for him in my memory, but I can't seem to find him.

I have been wondering why. Maybe it is just what always happens, Fraenkel points it out in his essay on *Modern Poetry* in this book, i.e., that some of the Fraenkel I knew got lost on the way to the printing press: it happens to all poets, and Fraenkel is a poet.

Fraenkel is in the depth of him a poet. His reasoning is not intellectual logic, it is not a mental process solely. He is the thinking artist, or if you like it better, the creative thinker. His thought is generated deep down in the center of his being; it is projected into the open by a process of intuition, divination, which, combined with his remarkably sensitive, clairvoyant and honest mind, takes him beyond the line of reflected truth and into the realm of primary cause—basic reality, as he might say himself.

The whole of him is thrown into action, and every faculty of his being is engaged in the effort, he vibrates with the strain as does a ship in the midst of a violent storm. He is a well-built ship, an honest craft, he will not deviate from his course, he will not flinch, for secretly he knows in his very bones that a ship is made to ride the storm, but that her final reward is to become one with the sea she sails, to dissolve in it, to go under.

To understand Fraenkel, to get at his full meaning, the usual way we read is not the right way: it is not enough to sit on the shore and watch the ship sail by; we must sail with her, we must get right in her wake, identify her destination with our own, for we are here in the presence of poetry.

Only when the book has become our personal experience—our



own innermost reality—will we enter into the profound meaning of it. So I say to myself.

A single motif, like a central column, goes through the entire book, the whole edifice of Fraenkel's thought is built on it. At the base of this column is the awareness of a truth, i. e. that modern man has died within himself, irrevocably, beyond the possibility of revival.

But underneath this awareness there is another, without which Fraenkel's thought would not go further than the affirmation of a condition, and consequently would not be creative in its essence. That could not happen to Fraenkel because he is a poet. There is then the other deeper awareness in him, i. e. that this death is not the dying of the whole man: the root of him remains alive and so a new life springs up again out of the old root after the death of the old tree has been completely consummated.

Fraenkel reaches down to that live root. And there his thought lights up still a third truth: *death is the condition for new life*. "It is necessary to accept death, and accept it not as a finality, but as the condition for new life", so I seem to hear Fraenkel saying, talking to himself while looking earnestly at me, as he always does.

He does the same thing in his book—he talks to himself. That is why it is an utterly honest book. It is also the cause of the tension that never lets up. The insistence in the tone is constant, it demands the sustained attention a man gives only to his own thinking. It might conceivably tire the reader, like watching a wheel turning at high and equal velocity. It might produce a sort of hypnotic attraction, immobilizing the mind into a hypertrophic state through the action of unvarying emphasis.

It is the one fault I would find with his method, if indeed it were nothing but a method. But it is not. The constancy of pressure must be due to the depth of the plane on which his thought moves, the plane—as I understand it—on which the equilibrium of process is constant: the basis.

Fraenkel's style is of a rare perfection: it is lucid, concise, has a steady onward drive; no meandering, no clogging, no obscurantism: his is one of the clearest ways of saying things.

I do not wish to be wiser than Fraenkel, but he will agree with



me that I ought to be at least as honest as he is. I will say then that he makes me more aware of the death-reality than of the life-reality. That man is dying, is dead on the inside without being aware of it he has convinced me. And he has done it not by the inexorable logic of his argumentation but because his truth is a poet's truth; because he carries the human tragedy in him; because it IS he. I hear—am I right?—in his unspoken words, something that seems to tell me that he has come upon the stark presence of the most terrible of deaths—the invisible death in the apparently still living. But the life—the proof of the creativity of death—aware of it he is, but he has not as yet come upon its full presence.

Death, the disintegration of the soul of man, man decaying in the vital center of him, he makes me feel that as a reality—part of the reality that I am. It is not quite so with its counterpart—life. He projects a light which emanates from the inmost depths of him, from the creative principle that he is: it is a certainty. But for some reason it affects me as an astronomic certainty: an invisible star at the end of a mathematical equation; it does not penetrate me with the white heat of a vital presence.

DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH sounds like a challenge; it seems to announce the coming of the other half of the equation—the life-half. It is important that Fraenkel complete his cycle.

One has to relearn how to read. A book is no longer an event in our word-smothered world, not much more than a new brand of pipe tobacco. Books are still made out of words, but the words most books are made of today are like the husk after the thrashing is done: the grain is not in it; were it in how could such quantities of words be absorbed without any improvement in world health?

It is remembered by very few that a word when it is a real word is a living particle of us, that words are explosives of highest tension and should not be fooled with. That words are as sacred as the life they spring from has been largely forgotten; who knows how to write or read unadulterated words now? DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH is a book made of such words. It is therefore an event in the world of books, as it is in the realm of creative thought.

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## GREEK CULTURE

PAIDEIA: THE IDEALS OF GREEK CULTURE. By Werner Jaeger. Oxford University Press: N. Y., 1939. Translated from the second German edition by Gilbert Highet. xxix plus 420 pp. \$3.75.

We are familiar enough with the ordinary categories of historical writing. What is usually simply called "history" is political history with a dash of economics; other familiar types include economic history with a dash of politics, histories of various arts and literatures (treated usually as if they existed *in vacuo*), linguistic histories with the same limitation, and purely narrative histories of various subjects. Probably the rarest and most interesting type of history is that which traces the ideas by which, consciously or unconsciously, civilizations are shaped. Herr Jaeger's *PAIDEIA* belongs to this small group: it follows the ideals of Greek culture (and hence of Greek education) from the legendary period to the end of the Peloponnesian War, collecting its evidence from literature, painting and sculpture, political history, and philosophy. Above all, it shows our over-specialized world that these various departments of human activity, which we are inclined to regard as existing independently, all necessarily give much the same evidence about the ideals of their creators, since they are inevitably the products of those ideals.

The thorough scholarship of *PAIDEIA* is far more common in histories than is Herr Jaeger's acute sense of historical perspective. To him history, even that of twenty-five centuries ago, is still alive in that it throws light on many of our present problems, but he never commits the fallacy of reading the present into the past or allowing it to usurp the center of the stage. Above all, there is no trace of that smug complacency which led Goethe's Wagner (and Victoria's Macaulay) to enjoy looking at the past in order to see how far we have advanced since that barbarous time. Within Greek history this perspective is even more valuable. We are so accustomed to think of "classical Greece" as a vague and static unity that it is most helpful to be reminded that Greek ideas, like any others, varied according to the time, the place, and the individual.

Since Herr Jaeger has no particular axe to grind, he can view these variations with admirable detachment, admitting all ger-

mane evidence and discarding conjectures unsupported by adequate data. Both his objective historical scholarship and his freedom from the moral prejudices of our own age are clearly shown in his refusal to be sidetracked onto one of the most hotly and fatuously debated issues of Greek life and literature: "It would be both vain and unsuitable either to work out unprovable psychological explanations of the nature of Sappho's Eros, or to grow indignant at the blasphemy of such explanations and assert that she and her friends felt only the emotions of which bourgeois Christianity would approve." Many other problems are dismissed as either requiring further study for their elucidation or being insoluble unless further data come to light, and thus we can feel confident that when an inference is drawn, even though the scope of the book may not permit a full discussion of the evidence, we can accept it without question.

It would be both false and libelous to praise PAIDEIA with the standard observation that once one has begun to read it he cannot put it down until he has finished it. It is not a book for the "general reader" of the spoonfeeding popularization books. It is addressed to the considerably rarer intelligent reader—the man who is not an expert in the subject, but who is sufficiently interested to be willing to think hard and precisely. It should be read slowly, in installments, with ample pauses for thought and digestion. This is not to say that it is a labored or dull book, but merely that it is not, and is not supposed to be, a book for the reader who is averse to mental activity. Herr Jaeger simply assumes that his audience will be sufficiently interested in the thoughtful study of a fascinating period in the development of the human mind to be above the meretricious devices of "human interest" and over-simplification. The ideas of Greece live in his book with their own life: they are not made into slapstick puppets for the groundlings. The book is in the best tradition of German scholarship, and Mr. Highet has done an admirable job of turning it into readable, idiomatic English—though I must confess a strong preference for *attitude toward* instead of his prevalent *attitude to*.

The struggles, errors, and triumphs of Greek attempts to determine the ideals by which a society was to live, and to educate in

accordance with them, give much food for thought on the dilemma of our own education and society, and we may be surprised to find many of our current doctrines existing as lively issues in the Athens of Pericles. However, the Greeks had a great advantage over us in that, in general, they considered the problems of education to be the broad problems of human life, whereas we are inclined to toy with them as if they were capable of solution by the jargon and statistics-mongering of a pseudo-science. One closes the book with the fantastic hope that our professors of "education" may lay aside *Aims and Objectives of Personality-Integration in the Junior High School* long enough to read PAIDEIA and learn something about the fundamental nature of the problems which they solve differently every spring.

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### MILTON AGONISTES

MILTON IN THE PURITAN REVOLUTION. By Don M. Wolfe, New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1941. xiv & 496 pp. \$4.00.

Against the complicated background of seventeenth century radicalism, Mr. Wolfe traces in illuminating detail the development of Milton's theories of ecclesiastical and secular polity. He shows us Milton's progression "from Puritan Anglican, to Presbyterian, to Independent tenets" and his corresponding gradual change through advocacy of constitutional monarchy, of parliamentarianism, of government by the best man, and finally of "spiritual oligarchy". He makes clear not only the generally recognized relationship between Protestantism and democracy, but also the many relationships between Milton's religious and his political radicalism, both based upon his insistence on the right of individual judgement.

Modern democratic government stems from the seventeenth century. If the development of English and American political theory and practice was not determined in the seventeenth century, it was begun. And it was begun in both theory and practice by men with whom Milton worked, and men against whom he

argued, and men who worked and argued independently of him, if not by Milton himself. In Wolfe's book we find Milton's views set off against those of Roger Williams, of Lilburne and Overton, of Walwyn, of Prynne, of Winstanley, and, less completely, against those of Cromwell and Ireton. Each comparison illuminates more than Milton's views alone.

But it is Milton's development with which the book is most concerned. Consequently it is his views that are given closest scrutiny. Milton students have long been conscious of the fundamental weakness in Milton's defence of the regicide, a weakness that runs through all the great political pamphlets, from the *TENURE OF KINGS AND MAGISTRATES* through *EIKONOKLASTES* and the two "Defences" of the people of England. Milton's dilemma is a real one. He has to show that the trial and execution of the king by a minority of Parliament, the test of whose fitness to judge was enmity to the king, was a legal trial. On democratic principles he has to defend military coercion. Wolfe's explanation of Milton's willingness to undertake this impossible task is important: "Milton would not grant the right of a people to be governed by a tyrant." "Liberty was . . . more fundamental than democracy. . . . And liberty was impossible as long as the king lived." Finally,

Tracing the record of these twenty years of Milton's association with Parliament, I have found one conviction inescapable: Milton cared not one jot whether the Parliament which he lauded or condemned was representative, whether it was appointed or elected, whether it was legal or illegal. What concerned him was whether or not, in his opinion, the Parliament which had assumed power was acting for the public welfare, was securing the liberties which he held so dear.

The paradox is in Milton, not in Wolfe's explanation.

Throughout Wolfe's whole work we are made conscious of Milton's and his fellows' constant striving for liberty as they variously conceived it. That it did not mean democracy, for Milton, we have already seen. But it was nonetheless a real need for him, and one from which grew the great mass of his prose, Latin and English. Even so, one may question a little the extravagance of Wolfe's praise of *AREOPAGITICA*, wondering whether it was quite so central to Milton's thought as Wolfe makes it, and I think we

must question some points in the chapter on PARADISE LOST. The implication of Wolfe's argument there, for example, is that the psychology and ethics embodied in PARADISE LOST grow out of Milton's political theory, that the principle that man's passions should be controlled by his reason is arrived at by analogy with the principle that rational men should govern the irrational in the state.

Milton's conception of man's government of himself, like his conception of governments in earth, hell, heaven, and home, is colored by the domination of superior virtue and wisdom. Even here his philosophy of leadership obtains: the soul, being compounded of the senses, the passions, and the reason, should yield freely to the government of reason.

The contrary is the truth, I think. Milton's ethics in PARADISE LOST and his politics there and earlier are based rather upon his psychology, upon his analysis of the human soul and his judgment of the human individual, and some of the changes in his political theory can be traced, I think, to changes in his conception of human nature that result from his experience with it.

A good book, obviously. If the views of the royalists were canvassed a little more fully, if Milton's influence on the political thought and practice of his own day and since were estimated with something of the clarity with which his expression of various trends of his time and his divergence from them are discussed, we should have nothing else to ask.

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### ORIGINS OF THE PICTURESQUE

THE LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM GILPIN (1724-1804) MASTER OF THE PICTURESQUE AND VICAR OF BOLDRE. By William D. Templeman (*Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3-4). 336 pp. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1939.

William Gilpin has been definitely a minor figure in the history of English literature—a small figure presented in low relief. Many

short histories have not mentioned him at all; the CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE presented him in half a page, mainly as an influence on other writers—the “Apostle of the Picturesque”. Without loss of perspective, and in proper and pleasing proportion, Mr. Templeman has made a life-size statue; now the whole man may be seen.

The thoroughness with which he has been studied is most obvious in the chapters on Gilpin as biographer, schoolmaster, critic of prints, and Vicar of Boldre. Gilpin began his literary career as biographer of his distinguished kinsman, Bernard Gilpin, the Elizabethan “Apostle of the North”. Then followed lives of other reformers (Latimer, Wicliff, Huss, Jerome, Zisca, and Cranmer), of a naval hero, and of Gilpin’s immediate ancestors. Mr. Templeman presents evidence that Gilpin, in his own time, was almost as well known as a biographer as he was a writer on the picturesque.

Master of Cheam School for more than a quarter of a century, Gilpin instituted a system of rules which he taught the boys to respect, favored athletic sports, and emphasized the teaching of the Scriptures and the strengthening of character. He has been quite overlooked by writers on the history of education, and his scheme for student participation in the government of the school was an important innovation which attracted some attention and was probably the source of Smollett’s description of the admirable school which Peregrine Pickle attended.

Gilpin’s *Essay on Prints* was known and discussed in England, Germany, Switzerland, France, Holland, and America, being printed in five editions at home and at least four translations abroad.

The chapters on Gilpin’s career as Vicar of Boldre are perhaps the most interesting in the book. Boldre was a forest parish and a channel-coast parish. The majority of the inhabitants were poor and ignorant and a large minority were lawless. Within its boundaries were poachers, trespassers, smugglers, and forest-borderers. Gilpin visited their huts, walked or rode all over the parish, became much loved in spite of the sternness with which he reformed them for their sins, wrote tracts on the lives of humble parishioners, preached practically and effectively, published a



book on the amusements of clergymen, and instituted and endowed parish schools.

In discussions of "Early Picturesque Usage" and the "Theory of the Picturesque" Mr. Templeman has traced the development of the meaning of *picturesque* up to the point when it became, as Landseer wrote in 1807, "fashionably technical in almost all conversations respecting art", and he has made a concise analysis of Gilpin's theory that "roughness" is the distinguishing quality of the picturesque. Gilpin's extraordinary influence is discussed in another chapter, wherein Mr. Templeman has gathered evidence that Mason, Gray, Walpole, Sir George Beaumont, Fanny Burney, Reynolds, Blake, Crabb Robinson, Southey, Hannah More, Samuel Rogers, Wordsworth, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Thoreau, and Holmes were among the men and women of letters who knew Gilpin's works and discussed them, usually with praise. Numerous writers on landscape gardening, rural architecture, and English topography, and dozens of compilers of guide-books derived their inspiration (and often much of their content) from Gilpin. Historians of literature have noted some of these influences before, but Mr. Templeman has greatly increased their impressiveness, not only by assembling them in one place, but also by documenting and interpreting them.

The bibliography contains fifty-six items under "Gilpin" as compared with eight items in the CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, and the list of books which the author has consulted is a considerable contribution to the bibliography of aesthetics. One might wish that the bibliography contained a list of translations of Gilpin's works, even though Mr. Templeman has listed them elsewhere. An index, several illustrations, excellent printing and paper, and a good binding (too often not available to purchasers of studies issued by university presses) make the volume attractive and useful. It combines biography, bibliography, the study of literary and social backgrounds, the study of the history of ideas, and the study of influences. Future historians of English literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will neglect at their own risk to give more attention to William Gilpin.

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## GENTLE SURGEON

A SURGEON'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Hugh Young. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1940; \$5.00; pp. 554.

In the annals of American medicine the name of Hugh Young is so closely coupled with Urology as to be almost synonymous; for Dr. Young, as head of the James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute at Johns Hopkins Hospital, in Baltimore, is the foremost Urological surgeon and diagnostician in this country, and the man who by his skillful invention and improvement of the surgical instruments used in his particular specialty, as well as by the originality of his operational technique, has saved thousands of lives. His life history is a fascinating one and should make a strong appeal to the layman whose interests tend to the scientific as to the medically-minded reader.

As Dr. Young's early days were spent in Texas at the time when that state was just emerging from frontier life, many of his boyhood and adolescent memories were, more or less, exciting and colorful. Augmenting this are the tales he heard during his childhood from his father and grandfather, both soldiers, one the youngest Brigadier-General in the Confederate Army and the other a Texas ranger. Dr. Young later found his own experiences in medical pioneering as stimulating as any of the exploits related by his father or grandfather.

Undecided as to a career, after graduating brilliantly with four degrees in three years, from the University of Virginia, Hugh Young choose journalism, but after a brief period, switched to medicine, and returned to the University of Virginia for his medical course. On graduation, he spent a short time in medical practice in Texas in the course of which, discovering his own limitations and need for further training, left Texas and went to Baltimore with the intention of entering Johns Hopkins for further surgical experience. After various difficulties he obtained a foothold on the surgical staff of Dr. William S. Halsted, Professor of Surgery, and came into intimate contact with Halsted and the other three eminent men, Drs. Welch, Osler and Kelley, all of whom were instrumental in making Johns Hopkins one of the foremost institutes of medical research in this country. Dr. Young draws a

vivid and memorable picture of each of these famous doctors and others with whom he was associated during his years at Hopkins.

The middle section of the book, about one hundred pages, is devoted to a simple and lucid explanation of the technique which has made Dr. Young famous among his colleagues, his operations on the prostate gland and other surgical procedures besides the uses of many of the instruments he has invented or improved for Urological surgery are illustrated by a step-by-step chart with the text describing the different processes in a manner which cannot fail to inform both the layreader and the medical student. This portion of the book is so placed as to be easily skipped by those to whom it becomes unpleasant or boring.

In the remaining chapters, Dr. Young narrates his meeting and subsequent friendship with Diamond Jim Brady, whose life he saved, and the factors that led up to the munificent gift of Mr. Brady to Johns Hopkins Hospital of the Urological Institute of which Dr. Young was made head and which enabled him to carry on his research on that subject, the years of service in the A.E.F. during the first World War when Dr. Young was enabled to render great service in controlling venereal disease among the American and Allied troops, his many and varied experiences at the Front during the War, his famous patients, including President Wilson, and his journeys to numerous countries, sometimes in the interests of medicine, at others merely for pleasure. There is an interesting chapter on the many political reforms in the State of Maryland in which Dr. Young had a hand in raising standards of medicine.

Among the many medical autobiographies appearing recently Hugh Young's book stands out as one of the most notable and thoroughly enjoyable from any point of view. Filled with humour, it is written with the ease and clarity of the successful professional man and is remarkably free from the egotism and exhibitionism of many of the current autobiographies. It is a history of a man who has led a full and successful life and has found the living of it very good, but has managed to maintain a balanced ego.

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